California Holocaust Memorial Week

May 2–6, 2005

"Caught in the Fire" by Ilana Nankin

Assemblywoman Rebecca Cohn
24th Assembly District

Acknowledgements

Thank you to:

South Bay Holocaust Survivors Group

Jewish Family Service

Myra Reinhard Family Foundation

Jewish Federation of Greater San Jose

"From Generation to Generation" Class,

Congregation Beth David Hebrew High School

Kehillah Jewish High School Students

National Council for Community & Justice

Jewish Partisan Education Foundation

Shoah Foundation

Alex Bauer

Vlada Gelfond

Deena Goldfeld

Helaine Green

Lindsay Greensweig

Agnes Grossinger

Dr. Vicki Harrison

Alicia Appleman-Jurman

Jackie Levinson

Sara Levy

Dottie Miller

Bettina Rosenberg

Joe Sorger

Ruth Zaltsmann

May 2, 2005

Dear Colleague:

I am proud to present a unique project from the 24th Assembly District in honor of 2005 California Holocaust Memorial Week. Please take a few moments to review and reflect upon the true-life stories that make up this booklet.

I have asked Holocaust survivors in my District to submit written accounts of their experiences. Their stories have been collected in this booklet to serve both as a reminder and as an archive. It is vital that we do our utmost to preserve these stories today, as there are fewer and fewer first-hand accounts lasting from year to year.

We are delighted this year to have the offices of Assembly Members Lloyd Levine, Gene Mullin, Fran Pavley, Todd Spitzer and Juan Vargas participating. They have worked to identify survivors in their district and those stories are also included here.

Some survivors were incapable or did not feel comfortable writing their own stories. I am proud to say that several high school student volunteers from my District took the time to sit, listen, and transcribe these stories. This sharing of stories from one generation to the next is what this project and Yom Hashoa are all about.

As an Assemblymember, I feel it is one of my duties to ensure that the realities of the Holocaust's horrors are never forgotten, so that they may never be repeated.

I would like to encourage you to consider participating in this project next year by locating and interviewing survivors in your own district.

Sincerely

Rebecca Cohn

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Third Person Accounts

Adam Cintz

By Amit Deutsch

Adam Cintz (originally Czynsz) was born on July 1, 1910 in Warsaw, Poland. His father, Shlomo, died of typhus in 1916 during World War I, when Adam was only six years old. His mother, Perla, was left to take care of Adam and his five siblings by herself. He had four sisters and a brother and was the second to youngest in the family. After Adam's father passed away, the family moved to Lodz. His family was very poor and they lived in a single room of an all-Jewish apartment building that had no bathrooms or running water. Instead of going to school, Adam stayed home and sold homemade cigarettes and carbonated water with the rest of his family to make a living. His family was also very religious; when he was 12 or 13 years old he got a job as a photographer and was fired within a week because his mother refused to let him work on the Sabbath.

At 16 years old, Adam got a job as a tailor and later worked in his uncle's underwear store. He got married to Genia in 1933, the same year that Hitler came into power. Anti-Semitism in Poland by that time was very strong and Jews were being attacked on the streets as early as 1936. In 1939, Hitler invaded Poland, which marked the beginning of World War II. Adam remembers hearing broadcasts from England telling the Poles not to worry and that help would be sent soon, but by the time all the Jews in Lodz were forced into a ghetto in the city, they had figured out that help wouldn't be arriving any time soon.

Conditions in the ghettos were simply inhumane. The barbed wire surrounding the perimeter was patrolled by soldiers, and anyone who tried to sneak food into the ghettos was shot on sight. The little food that was given out was distributed as rations. Often, when a child died, the family kept his/her body in the home for up to a week so that they would still get the child's share. The death rates in such deprived conditions were unimaginable. Six gravediggers were employed at the Lodz's normal cemetery. In contrast, the ghetto had nearly two hundred gravediggers who could not dig more than fifty graves per day, even though the daily death toll was nearly double that number. More than a few of those deaths were suicides. Adam remembers hearing about a woman who got stopped at the barbed wire by a soldier who did not want to shoot her. She deliberately crossed the barbed wire because she wanted to die. For a while, doctors were allowed to prescribe two pound of potato peels to people who got sick from starvation, but that policy was soon discontinued so that the horses could be fed instead. 1941 and 1942 were the worst years in the ghetto, and most of the deportations took place in 1942, 1943, and 1944. People who were being deported to the death camps were told to bring as much as they could carry with them and that they were being sent to work elsewhere. Adam's only brother volunteered to be deported so that he could stay with his wife and children. He was never heard from again.

During those years in the ghetto, Adam worked in a factory as the main mechanic for the sewing machines. People who had jobs were given an extra bowl of soup every day so Adam found jobs for nearly his entire family. In 1936, he and his wife had a child named Shlomo. One day, the Germans issued a notice saying that no Jew would be allowed to leave their house the next day. Adam hid with his family in a small, 8x8 water tank on the first floor of his factory, and through a tiny hole they watched as the ghetto police went from home to home and collected children for deportation. Adam himself was finally deported near the end of the war in August of 1944.

Before he was deported, the officer in charge of the ghetto told Adam and the other Jews that he wanted to kill them all, but he preferred that they go to work. The true irony of these words lay in the train's destination- Auschwitz. Adam does not remember how long the train ride took, for it is difficult to tell time when you're packed in a small cattle car with a few buckets available for toilet use. Even cattle should never be treated so terribly, let alone living human beings. But the train ride was very minor compared to the camp itself.

Auschwitz was a God-forsaken place from the moment the trains were unloaded. Adam was separated from his wife, who was holding their son and their nephew by the hand. When Adam's son tried to hold onto his mother, she was slapped hard in the face by a soldier and thrown into the women's line. Adam was taken to a barrack where Jews slept on blankets that were strewn on the hard floor. Sensing something was wrong Adam asked someone where the children were. Pointing with his hand, the man said, "You see that bonfire over there; they are burning." Every morning, everyone was counted outside in the cold. People, if you could call them such at this point, hid bits of paper and blanket under their clothes to keep warm. One morning, an SS officer ordered everyone to remove their shirts and anyone who had anything hidden underneath was beaten severely. Adam was discovered with a thin strip of blanket wrapped around his stomach, but before he was beaten, the SS officer was called away. When he returned, through a complete miracle, he forgot about Adam and moved on to the next person.

Adam was taken to work at a factory in the camp. During the winter, the foreman wanted a sled built for his son. Adam volunteered for the job and was rewarded with bread. In this way Adam survived the terrible starvation of the camps. Near the end of the war, Adam was transferred to another camp in Germany. He and the Jews transferred with him were given boxes full of food and cigarettes. This new camp had a few buildings with sand floors and blankets. Adam and the other Jews in his building decided to hide the food they were given in the sand under the blankets before they went out to be counted. When he returned, he found his food was still there while the starving inmates had robbed all the others. The hunger was so great by this time that people were resorting to eating parts of the dead.

But no atrocity lasts forever. Adam woke up on the morning of May 2, 1945 to the sound of hysteria. "There are no guards and the gates are open!" Someone in his room shouted. Adam wasted no time before running outside to the waiting American soldiers.

This time it was the Germans who were walking with their hands on their heads. One American soldier in a tank offered Adam a gun to shoot the Germans with, but he refused. The liberated survivors of the camp walked to Ludwigslust, the nearest city, where German citizens were in a frenzy, grabbing all they could hold from the warehouses. When he and a group of Poles he was traveling with decided to return to Poland later that month, one of his friends gave a Russian soldier a bottle of brandy in return for a horse and buggy. The group traveled on the road first, but Russian soldiers were patrolling the roads and forcing people into working or into the army. One Russian soldier stopped them and tried to take Adam away, but a woman traveling with him screamed that he was her husband and that he was very sick, saving him from the soldier. After that incident, they only traveled through the forest.

In about May of 1945, Adam finally reached his hometown of Lodz to discover from a woman there that his wife was at the camp in Theresienstadt, Czechoslovakia. He traveled to Theresienstadt by hiding in the bathroom of a train and sneaking out when the conductor walked by. Adam was reunited with his wife after digging a hole under the barbed wire surrounding the camp. Their son and their nephew, however, did not make it out of Auschwitz alive.

Once Theresienstadt was liberated, they chose to travel to Landsberg, Germany where they stayed in a displaced persons camp. Soon after arriving, Adam saw a sign advertising immigration to the United States and decided to apply. After a few weeks he was accepted and told to take some x-rays to check that he was healthy. He and his newborn son passed, but his wife was rejected due to a spot they found on her lungs. It took four years from 1945 to 1949 until she too was accepted and together the family moved to San Jose, California.

In the United States, Adam got a job making seat covers, a task that he'd never done in his life. Afterward he left to work as a mechanic for Levi Strauss and then later decided to run his own shop in Palo Alto, where he worked for 25 years before retiring at age 63. His wife suffered from major psychological damage after the Holocaust and passed away of old age in 1995. In 1996 he got remarried to Silvia, who passed away in 2003. He has two sons and four grandchildren. Today he is almost 95 years old and still living well.

Although I attempted to summarize it here, Adam's story of survival is truly beyond anyone's words. The inhumane atrocities that he, along with many other Jews, has faced in his life are doomed to be a black spot on our history for a long, long time. Had I never met Adam, I would never have believed that any man could live to experience such horrors as Auschwitz and the Lodz Ghetto, and still continue for so long without giving up. The same courage and determination that helped him evade deportation for so long and later helped him survive the camps have stayed with him until this very day. From hearing his story I have learned that no matter how severely life treats us, the best we can do is keep the courage to move on and never forget those who did the same during those few terrible years that will echo for a million years to come.

Aleksandr Galburt

By Maryana Smolyanitsky

Aleksandr Galburt was born in 1925 in Minsk, Belarussia. His mother Haya Libo, was also born in Minsk in 1896. His father, Yefim Galburt, was born in 1888 in Daraganovo. His family consisted of his parents and his older brother, Michael Galburt. His father, Yefim, was a factory worker, and his mother was a housewife. In his city, just like the rest of the former Soviet Union, the communists ordered that all synagogues and Hebrew schools be shut down. Because of this they didn't have the chance to observe holidays, learn the Hebrew language, or study Judaism.

Aleksandr attended school. On June 22, 1941, while listening to the radio everybody heard about the commencement of the war. He was only 15 years old. By June 25 Germany started the air bombing of Minsk. The residents of Minsk tried running from the bombings. The Galburt family ran toward the west, but were unsuccessful. So they tried running toward the east, but they were escorted back to their city by German soldiers who occupied Minsk on June 28, 1941.

On that same day Aleksandr got his first look at a German soldier. The figure is still vivid in his mind, as if it happened yesterday. With German soldiers taking over the city, the Jews began noticing all the commands that soldiers were giving them. The first command was that all men ages 15-45 years of age register at German offices. In the beginning of July, Germans began to break into Jewish homes and grab the first Jewish man they saw, then drive him away. On July 8, 1941 they heard that Germans were going to shoot the first 100 Jews. Since that time pogroms (random shootings) became a part of their daily lives. In one of these situations Aleksandr lost his two uncles. The Germans took them away and Aleksandr never saw them again.

At the same time, Germans were setting up concentration camps around the city. The first one was in the village of Drozdi. In the middle of July, the first ghetto, known as the Minsk Ghetto, was set up. Within five days all the remaining Jews were forced to leave their homes and settle into the ghetto. In the ghetto the Germans continued to take away Jews and shoot them. During this time Aleksandr's father was taken away and Aleksandr never saw him again. In the ghetto the Jews had to wear yellow armbands. Food was scarce. With the sparse rations they were fed, they were forced to search in garbage cans for any remaining food.

The Germans commenced a pogrom on every communist holiday. Germans began to remove children to labor camps, and during the next pogrom, Aleksandr's mother hid him and three other relatives in an underground shelter. She did this because Aleksandr was

already 16 at this point, and he was forced to go to work. This was dangerous because he could have been shot at any given moment. Sitting in this underground shelter, they heard the Germans take away the members of their family one by one. That was the last that he saw of his mother. Later, that evening when it was dark they heard a familiar voice saying "whoever is alive come out," and Aleksandr and his brother saw their cousin Leva. The Germans were looking for men who knew how to work with electricity, so Aleksandr and his brother went to work at an electricity station.

Aleksandr's older brother Michael became sick and in March 1942 he passed away. Aleksandr was the only one left out of his 22 closest relatives; he was all alone. In May of 1942 Aleksandr was put into a labor camp called Bolshoy Trostyanets and he worked unloading sand. At the end of the summer of 1943 all the prisoners, including Aleksandr, were supposed to be driven to a death camp and shot, but rain started coming down hard, and a soldier hid them in a barn. Within this barn there was a small window. Aleksandr took off all signs on him that made it obvious he was Jewish and climbed out of this window. He managed to run back to the ghetto to his house. There he changed back into his own clothes and nobody noticed that there was a new person in town. That is how he saved his life.

Throughout Belarussia there were many partisans. Aleksandr decided to run from the ghetto and find a partisan group. On his way home from work he ripped off the yellow armband. For six days he sat in the ashes of a closed brick works factory. He learned that the ghetto he lived in was not open anymore because everybody that was left had been driven to a death camp where they were shot. Leaving Minsk was impossible, because the city was surrounded by police officers who asked for identification, and he had none. On the seventh day Aleksandr was stopped by many officers who asked him many questions. He was forced to lie to them. He told them that he was a refugee from another city, and he was on his way to exchange his clothes for food. They told him that when he was returning home, he should walk through their post. But he didn't return home because he was on his way to join the partisans.

Eventually he reached a village where the Jewish partisan group came to get food. Aleksandr met a partisan and became part of his group. From August 1943 he lived and fought with these partisans and one day, in 1944, when the war was almost over, the partisan group made it to Minsk. He returned to his old home and began his new life.

In 1950 Aleksandr finished university and got married. He, his wife and two sons moved to America in 1994. Aleksandr is a senior citizen. He lives with his wife and during his free time he writes books about his memories of World War II. These memories are still a heart ache to him. Aleksandr was the only survivor who actually cried during his interview with me, which made me feel horrible that I was putting him through all this pain all over again, which made me want to cry with him.

Alex Bauer

By Jeffrey Weiss

I'm extremely glad I had the opportunity to talk to Alex Bauer one-on-one. I was lucky enough to learn his story and to tell future generations the atrocities of the Holocaust. From the interview, I learned an immense amount about Dachau, Muhldorf, and Mittergars. Here is his story:

Alex Sandor Bauer, originally named Bauer Sandor, was born to Joseph and Sarah Bauer on May 25, 1922, in the small town of Komadi, Hungary, which had approximately twelve thousand residents. Alex's immediate family consisted of his mother, father, and seven siblings. Alex's father owned a dry goods store and had mostly gentile clients. The clients were mostly Hungarian farmers.

Alex Bauer was raised Orthodox. His family kept a kosher home, celebrated the Shabbat, observed the holidays, and attended services weekly at the local orthodox synagogue. There was no noticeable anti-Semitism, except infrequently, when there were signs of it at his house.

He went to school in Komadi until he reached fourteen. He attended a Jewish school for the first four years. From age ten to fourteen, he attended the public middle school. During his time in Komadi, there was anti-Jewish legislation, but the Hungarians continued to resist pressure to deport their Jewish population.

He moved to Budapest, Hungary to attend the National Hungarian Jewish Teacher Seminary from 1936 to 1941. He was awarded a scholarship to attend the Jewish Teacher Seminary, which was valuable because his parents were hit hard as a result of the 1930s depression. He lived in the school dormitory, which was a split dormitory, with the first four stories housing the Rabbinical Seminary students and the fifth and sixth stories housing the Jewish Teacher Seminary. Of the one million residents in Budapest, one third of the population was Jewish. While at the National Hungarian Jewish Teacher Seminary, the Hungarian government forced all men of military age, ages eighteen to forty, to enter the Hungarian Forced Labor Service. Two of his brothers were forced to go, but Alex had an exemption because he was in school.

After five years, he completed the National Hungarian Jewish Teacher Seminary, so he traveled to Szeged to attend college. During his college years, he studied math and science to earn a high school teacher's diploma in both math and science.

In March 1944, the German government tricked Hungary into letting down their guard. Hitler scheduled a meeting with the Hungarian king, Miklós Horty, in the Nazi state of Germany. On March 19, 1944, while Horty was in Germany meeting with Hitler, German troops occupied all of Hungary. This feat took only one day to accomplish, as there was no resistance put up by the surprised Hungarian government or the Hungarian people. From then on, life as Alex knew it, changed. Alex, along with all other Jews was required to wear a yellow star on his clothing when outside and only walk on the streets during daylight. Jews had to drop out of all public schools, which meant that Alex had to drop out of college, and Jews had a curfew at night. In addition, they had to turn in their radios and cameras to the government. Deportations started shortly thereafter, and Jews were rounded up by the Hungarian police and taken to Hungarian work-camps, where they supplied troops on the front line. The Nuremburg laws also took effect, and steps were taken by the German government to trick the Hungarians into deporting their Jews to Auschwitz. Although anti-Semitic, Horty refused to deport Hungarian Jews to Auschwitz. Alex thinks that Horty's decision not to deport the Jews could be because Horty knew the war was over and either did not like genocide, or was afraid that sending Jews to Auschwitz could result in him being tried in future war tribunals. But, when Horty's son was taken hostage by the German government, Horty, in exchange for his son's life, agreed to allow deportation of the Jews to Auschwitz. In May 1944, deportations began, and between June fourth and sixth, Alex's parents were taken to Auschwitz, never to be heard from again.

On June 6, 1944, Alex Bauer was forced to report to the Hungarian forced labor service along with all the Jewish males from eighteen to forty who were previously exempt from going. Alex, along with the other Jews, took a train to the center of Hungary, in the vicinity of Nagykőrős, and along with one hundred fifty to two hundred laborers, worked at an ammunition depot hidden in the mountainside. The laborers were provided with the same rations as the guards, which gave them the strength to work hard. He worked as an engineer because of his math skills, allowing him to do lighter work. One of his tasks was to design sand barriers around the ammunition storehouses, and design a swimming pool, constructed from the lagoon and its sand. The barriers were to prevent a bomb dropped by the British from causing a domino-effect and obliterating the whole facility. While digging to build the barriers, the endless shoveling opened wounds in Alex's hand, causing his hand to become infected. He was eventually treated in the nearby city of Nagykőrős. Finally, on October 13, 1944, the ammunition depot was evacuated.

On October 15, 1944, the Nazis overthrew Horty's government. At the same time, Alex and his group of Jews were forced to march west, across the Danube River to the Austrian-Hungarian border. At the beginning of the march, the guards told them that the group was on their way to a family camp near Vienna, where they would be able to stay with their families for the remainder of the war. Apparently, this was to dissuade people from attempting to escape. The guards also threatened that if anyone tried to escape, they would be shot on the spot. Alex decided to stay on the march because he believed the Hungarians were telling the truth. Altogether, the march west to the Austrian-Hungarian border took roughly two to three weeks. When the group finally arrived at the border, they

were greeted by the presence of many other Jews in their same position. Following two to three days of processing, they were marched to Zundorf, Austria, where they were handed over to the Germans.

All the Jews were forced to board the train; if they didn't, they would face the SS troops with their machine guns, along with their dogs. People were packed into the wooden cattle cars and the door was shut and locked. They were packed so tight, forcing people to stand throughout the trip. Alex did not mind, since it was only supposed to be an hour trip to Vienna; at least that is what they were told! The day passed, then night passed, and then the next day came which confused and frightened the people. Where were they going? They certainly weren't going to Vienna! Also, throughout the trip, people were experiencing hunger and were very thirsty. There was no water or food provided during the train ride. They arrived at their final destination, Dachau, the middle of the next day.

When the Jews arrived at Dachau, they were greeted by armed SS troops with their dogs, and the SS yelling "heraus" and "schnell." The first day at Dachau, Alex was "processed" along with many other Jews. In the beginning, they were stripped naked and all their hair was shaved off with a razor. Next, their body was mopped with a disinfectant fluid. His skin burned because it was raw from being shaved. After the disinfectant fluid station, they were taken to a long table, where they had to turn in their valuables and their paperwork. Next was registration. No longer was Alex Bauer a person, but he was a number—prisoner 124704. Finally, each person was given a piece of thin underwear, pair of pants, shirt, hat, and a pair of gloves. People were forced to trade with fellow prisoners to get the correct size. They must not have had enough jackets, because Alex was told he could pick a jacket from the pile of jackets. In this pile, he found the warm jacket which he was given by one of his fellow marchers on the march to the Austrian-Hungarian border. He also was able to keep his shoes, which, he believes, helped saved his life.

In Dachau, Alex helped unload bags of grain from the incoming trains. One time while transferring grain, he placed his gloves on the pole and looked away. After turning back to get his gloves, he found they were gone. The meals at Dachau consisted of three ladles of liquid split up throughout the whole day; one ladle, resembling coffee, for morning, one ladle with green leaves for lunchtime, and one ladle with green leaves, plus a slice of bread and a small slab of margarine for dinner. He stayed at Dachau for about ten days before being transferred to one of its "satellite" camps, forty miles east of Munich, to Muhldorf. In Muhldorf, they served the same food. At Muhldorf, prisoners weren't required to work on Sundays. He spent four weeks at this camp, and in the four weeks, people lost a tremendous amount of weight due to the deprivation of adequate food. Once, on a trip home from a work detail, he found a whole potato in the snow. Despite the lack of food, Alex still had the will power not to eat the whole potato at once. The potato lasted about five days. At the end of four weeks in Muhldorf, he was again transported, this time to the third Dachau "satellite" camp, Mittergars.

In Mittergars, there were about six hundred prisoners. On Sundays people didn't work

and people were even given artificial sweetener in addition to their standard dinner. For dinner, Alex sometimes added snow to his bowl, crumbled bread and margarine into the bowl, and then heated the contents using the small stove near the kapo's bed in the barrack. Every two to three weeks on Sundays, there would be a time to bathe. If on the particular Sunday there was bathing, three barrels would be placed outside the barracks. If you wanted to bathe, you would undress and run barefoot to the barrels, crawl in to the cold water for five to ten seconds, pull yourself out, then run barefoot back to the barracks. There was no soap while washing, just the cold water, and there were no towels for drying. During this time, the prisoners' shirts were taken to be disinfected and kill the lice. However, once the prisoner got his shirt back a day later, the shirt was covered in lice again. Even though Sundays were a time of rest, there wasn't a lot of talking. If people were talking, food was normally the subject.

About a month to a month and a half after being taken to Mittergars, "Red Head", as the SS officer was known, took Alex's jacket because he wanted it, and replaced it with the regular thin prisoner jacket. Red Head told Alex he would be given one extra ladle for his jacket. Although he didn't believe Red Head, he still gave it a try. Alex snuck to the back of the kitchen and knocked on the kitchen door. When a Russian war prisoner answered, Alex pointed to the bowl, and he was given an extra ladle of soup. This time it included pieces of potato, not normally found in soup given during dinner. This happened for roughly a week.

Another inmate in the camp, Nick Hoffman, had been friends with Alex since they were fourteen years old. They had gone to high school together, roomed together in college, and were now going through the horror of the camps together. Alex got to keep his shoes in the beginning and so did Nick. Somehow, Nick did not have his shoes anymore, and they were replaced with the standard issue wooden sandals. Due to the harsh winter, Nick's feet developed frostbite. After getting frostbite, Alex carried Nick to the work detail. Nick eventually could not go to work because of his extremely bad case of frostbite. Nick was required to go to the infirmary, and he was never seen again.

There was another key incident that occurred at Mittergars during the winter of 1944/45. Alex, along with fifteen prisoners, were marched to a farm. While the SS guard was in the house, the farmer's wife took their group into a shed and fed them cooked vegetables and bread. Another example of kindness by strangers was during his work detail at a cement factory at Mittergars. While on the work detail and while SS guards were marching in circles right next to the prisoners, one of the Germans slipped Alex a red apple. Except for these very few occurrences, Alex felt "abandoned by humanity." Of the one hundred prisoners who traveled with Alex from Muhldorf to Mittergars, only eight survived!

Finally, in mid April 1945, he was taken back to Muhldorf camp. Three thousand people were on that train to Muhldorf. Those three thousand people were headed toward Dachau. Between Muhldorf and Dachau, the train stopped and the guards let the prisoners go, saying that the Bavarians and Americans had reached an agreement and the war was

over. Everyone went their separate ways, but first each looked for food. Alex found a pile of dried cabbage, which he placed into his pockets. All of a sudden gunshots were heard, and the guards were instructed to round up the Jews. Alex, along with four other prisoners, hid in a local shed. Unfortunately, one of the prisoners wanted to drink water from a nearby pond. The guards detected their hiding place. Alex and the people who hid with him raced to get on to the train, to avoid being shot by the guards. The train traveled south toward the Alps to Starnberger See. There, American fighter jets strafed the Nazi troop-carrying train, which happened to be located next to Alex's train. His train was hit by some of the stray bullets. The train then traveled to Seeshaupt (southern tip of the lake), where the Jews were left to die. Fortunately, on April 30, 1945, the American tanks appeared. Alex was filled with tremendous elation when he saw the white star because he knew he had managed to survive.

After this long ordeal, he was taken to a makeshift hospital, where German doctors cared for him. He was suffering from Typhus and starvation. After three months in the hospital (May to July), he was released. Then, Alex went to the DP camp in Feldafing, a former military base, from the summer of 1945 to early 1946. In the camp, he believed he was the only survivor from his family until he received a letter from his sister Magda. In the handwritten letter, she said that two of his brothers and two of his sisters were waiting in Hungary for him. It said that Klara, his youngest sister, survived Mauthausen, Magda survived Bergen-Belsen, of his two brothers in the Hungarian slave-labor, only one survived, and his handicapped brother remained in Hungary throughout the war. Alex didn't want to go into Russian-controlled Hungary because he knew that if he did, he wouldn't be allowed to leave. Three girls wanted to go back to Hungary, so Alex and two other Holocaust survivors escorted them as far as the end of the American zone. Alex and his companions told the conductor of the train to tell them when was the last American stop, so they could get off. But, the conductor didn't tell the boys. They were in Russia without a way to get out. Fortunately, they found someone who was willing to take them out of Russia in exchange for the cigarettes Alex and his companions had on them. Alex didn't smoke, so he was happy to give them up to leave Russia. Under the cover of darkness, the men snuck out of Russian-controlled territory, and back into the American-controlled territory. After this ordeal, he traveled to Munich.

With the help of the Joint Distribution Committee while his American visa was being processed, he began college in Munich. He received 180 German marks per month because he was a survivor. He received a degree in electrical engineering in 1948, and found his first job with the German company Telefunken, located by the concentration camp Dachau. Despite the close proximity to Dachau, Alex still went and didn't fear his German coworkers. If anything, he felt they should fear him. At Telefunken, he made radios until he received a letter to report to Immigration. Immigration told him that his American visa was ready, and there was room for him to go. Alex declined, saying that he wanted to work more and learn more English before leaving for America. Immigration told him this might be Alex's only chance to go to America, so Alex packed his few belongings and traveled on the ship "General C.C. Ballou", a former American troop transport ship. He did not get

seasick during the entire week trip across the Atlantic to New York Harbor.

The visas were checked aboard the ship and the refugees were allowed to officially enter America. After debarking, he took the train through Chicago to Racine, Wisconsin. According to him, this was a "fairy tale town" because he was used to seeing the bombed-out cities in Germany. Alex was sponsored by the Jewish community of Racine, Wisconsin. He stayed with Mr. and Mrs. Stern in Racine before he traveled to Chicago to find a job. His first job was with Zenith, a television company, earning a dollar an hour pushing carts around the factory. When the company realized he was good with radios, he became a troubleshooter and was given a raise. Also in Chicago, he met his wife, Rita. They were married on June 6, 1956, the anniversary of D-Day. After getting a job offer, they moved to California. Alex and Rita and their children Kenneth and Stephen made their home in Sunnyvale. Alex and Rita still live in the same beautiful home they have been living in since they moved to California.

Alex Bauer's story gave me insight about the deplorable conditions and environment in work camps. Although he credits his survival to miracles such as keeping his shoes and his warm jacket for a month and a half, I credit his survival to his willpower not to let the Germans and the Hungarians beat him. I am really glad he is still alive to speak of the atrocities that plagued him.

Alicia Appleman-Jurman

By Eliana Green

My Friend, Alicia

It all started when I was greeted by a smiling face that said, "please come in darling." That face belongs to Alicia Appleman-Jurman. As I stepped into the house, I felt the comfort of being at home. Alicia and I have been great friends for quite a while. And I was excited to hear the amazing story of her childhood. As Alicia asked us to sit down at the kitchen table, she put a bowl of fresh potato latkes in the center of the table, and told us to enjoy. One thing you should know about Alicia is that she is always so giving and kind. You never leave her house without a wonderful surprise or gift. My mom and I ate the delicious potato latkes and talked with Alicia about all of her fascinating stories.

Once we had eaten, Alicia and I began to review her story. We started off by discussing Alicia's way of sharing her story with others. From the time Alicia was young, she knew she would share her experiences as a young girl in the Holocaust with as many people as possible. Inspired by young children, Alicia wrote her extraordinary book *Alicia: My Story*. Her book won two awards and Alicia used the proceeds to give clothing to needy children in Israel, which is an example of the kind of person she is. Alicia has told her story throughout the United States and Canada. She has spoken to students as young as fifth graders, and to students in colleges and universities. Anyone who has been lucky enough to have the privilege of hearing her fascinating story is sure to realize that she makes it a life changing experience.

Alicia was nine years old when the war started in 1939. She had three older brothers, Zachary, Moshe and Bunio, and one younger brother Herzl. Her father was an artist who designed fabrics for mostly men's clothing, and was a partner in a fabric factory. Her mother was a language teacher in a private high school. Although she was born in Rosulna (in the Carpathian mountains), her hometown was Buczacz, Poland. About 18,000 of the 80,000 people in her hometown were Jewish. Out of the 6,000 Jewish children in her hometown, only five survived.

Alicia went to a Catholic school when she was a young girl because it was the only school available, and she went to a Hebrew academy every afternoon for three hours, which she enjoyed very much. She had many Jewish friends, and non-Jewish friends who she felt equally comfortable with.

At age eight, Alicia learned about anti-Semitism. Her oldest brother Zachary had been a student in the city of Lvov. In May of 1938, he came home from the conservatory of

music badly beaten by Polish students because he was a Jew.

In 1939 the Germans signed a non-aggression treaty with Russia, and both countries attacked Poland. Alicia's hometown Buscacz fell under the Russian occupation. The Russians closed the Hebrew academy. Alicia and her fellow students continued going secretly to their classes, which moved daily to a different location.

The Russians exiled many Poles and Jews to Siberia. Her family fell into the category of "enemies of the Soviet Union." Her second oldest brother, Moshe, decided to take up an offer to study in Russia hoping to prevent his family from being exiled to Siberia. The Russians lied. It wasn't a school – it was a labor camp. He ran away and returned home. After three weeks at home, the police arrested Moshe and took him to prison in Chortkov, where he died of an unknown illness. He was 15 years old. The tragedy of Alicia's family had started already under the Russian occupation.

In 1941 Germany broke the peace treaty with Russia and invaded that country. Alicia's hometown fell under the German occupation. There were rumors of what the Germans were doing to the Jews. It was hard to believe that an enlightened nation known to the Jews before World War I as the Austrian-Hungarian Empire would turn into a nation of murderers. Tragically, they soon found out the truth. The German police ordered all Jews from the age of 18 to 50 to register at the police station. If a man did not appear, his family would be shot. Six hundred leading citizens were detained after the registration, among them Sygmund Jurman, Alicia's father. They were murdered, and their bodies thrown into open pits. Three days after the registration, the Germans offered to return the men in exchange for money and jewels. The families believed them, including Alicia's mother. Murder, lies and humiliation became a steady portion meted out by the Germans to the Jews.

The Jews of Buscacz were ordered to move into a certain poor section of town that the Germans defined as a "ghetto." The area was not fenced in – it was an open ghetto. The people were made to wear white armbands with embroidered stars of David in blue thread. They were not given any food. To get food they had to leave the ghetto, cross the main street and reach the farmer's market. Alicia and her friends realized the danger to their parents of being caught in the market. All the children decided they would protect their families by going to the market to obtain the food themselves, since they thought they could escape more easily when caught by the Germans or Ukrainian police. Hundreds of children were caught and murdered.

Now at the age of 11, Alicia and all other Jewish children were not allowed to go to school. Alicia was a brilliant child and she loved to go to school. She wasn't going to let anyone stop her from learning. One day during class, Alicia sat outside the classroom in a tree listening to the lesson. The teacher asked a question that Alicia knew the answer to – she clumsily raised her hand and fell out of the tree. When the teacher told Alicia that she had to leave, Alicia answered her, "one day, one day, if I live through the war, I'm going to go to school forever."

The same year, while she was playing chess with two Jewish boys, refugees from Germany, two SS men broke into the house and marched Alicia and the others outside. They beat and killed some of the people and took the remaining ones to the train station. The Germans let dogs loose on them and the people had nowhere to go but inside the train cars. The doors locked and the train took off to an unknown destination.

Alicia's car happened to have bars on the windows, and adults managed to spread the bars. They realized that only children would be able to fit through and before Alicia could say anything, she was pushed out the window and told to follow the tracks home. The German bullets fell all around her. Other children had been pushed out as well, but Alicia ended up being the only one to survive. Alicia woke up in her bed six days later. She had a concussion, but never really knew how she returned home.

More than a million people in eastern Poland died in "actions." Actions were committed by special units of S.S. Einzatzgruppen with the collaboration of the Gestapo and the Ukrainian and Polish police. In these actions they would shoot innocent Jewish men, women and children without mercy. They would surround the ghetto, and break into homes – breaking everything on the way. The noise would scare people in hiding, especially children who would start to cry, and betray the hiding place. Many times the Germans would remain quietly in the houses so that people would think they left – hoping to hear a child cry or somebody cough. After they found the hiding place, they told everyone to go outside. Those who resisted were shot in place. The rest were taken to open graves and murdered. The Germans often pumped gas into the hiding place, threw in hand grenades or set the house on fire.

After hearing about the murders of three girls that Zachary had tried to save, he and his friends organized a resistance group called "Nekama" (revenge). This group punished those who betrayed and killed Jews. Zachary was betrayed by a Polish friend while he was trying to rescue a family with four children. He was tortured then hung in the prison yard. When Alicia found out where he was and how we was murdered, she went to sit under the tree he was hanging from. A Ukrainian policeman came up to her, took his gun to her head, and told him he would shoot her. She told him she really didn't care – that he should shoot, but for some unknown reason he did not. The next day Alicia and her brother's friend cut Zachary down and buried him in the Jewish cemetery. Alicia promised him that if she lived she would be his silenced voice.

Alicia's brother Bunio, was taken to a work camp. One of the boys at the work camp tried to escape but was captured. The S.S. and Gestapo took all the boys at the camp, made them stand in a circle. They counted off every tenth boy and shot them. Alicia's brother Bunio was a tenth boy. Alicia then had to give the tragic, devastating news to her mother.

In December, 1942, Alicia came home carrying two pails of water and put them in the hall. Suddenly, a Ukrainian policeman entered the hall and, reading from a yellow

pad, asked for her mother Frieda Jurman. Alicia nodded her head and bolted. Alicia had to get the policeman away from the home. She was taken to prison where she was put in a cell with many older women. The following morning they were taken into an office where they were registered by a Ukrainian policeman. Alicia recognized him as her friend Olga's father, and she felt betrayed. He urged her to beg for her life when the Germans came. She refused. She would rather die as a proud Jewish girl, and would not ask for her life from the murderers of her family and her people. The Ukrainian policeman got angry and slapped her across her face without any remorse or sympathy. Soon after the registration the Jews were taken outside, loaded onto sleighs, and brought to the Chortkov prison where Alicia's brother Moshe had died during the Russian occupation.

Two S.S. men holding bags collected valuables from the prisoners. All Alicia had were her earrings. She took one off and threw it in the bag and tried to take off the other, but couldn't. She asked politely for more time. One of the S.S. men stepped forward and tore her earring off. Alicia got angry and in perfect German gave him a piece of her mind, telling him that he was a disgrace to his uniform and he would pay for his crimes. For this the German crushed her under the iron spikes of his boots and threw her unconscious body into the prison cell. The people in her cell were forced to drink water that later was found out to have been contaminated with Typhoid. Alicia drank some of the water. During her stay in prison, she got sick with Typhoid, was severely beaten, and then thrown into the cemetery to be buried. She was still unconscious. The Jews from the ghetto were ordered to bury those at the cemetery. Mr. Gold, the man in charge of the burial group, picked Alicia up and realized she was still alive. So he put her in the grave, and when the Germans left, took her out and brought her to his home where he and his wife nursed her back to relative health.

Seven weeks later, Alicia returned home to find her mother and brother sick with typhoid. She knew she could not take her family into hiding if there was an action because they had high fevers, so she dug a hole under her bed for them. At night when the action started, she took her mother and little brother into the hole, she spread the pails from the outhouses all over the house, and she lay down on top of the opening of the hiding place, promising herself that before they killed her mother and brother, they would have to kill her first. The Germans did not enter their room.

In 1943 Buczacz was declared "Judenrein" (clean of Jews). Alicia, her family, and the remaining Jews in the ghetto were relocated to the Kopechince ghetto, which was located 30 km east of Buczacz. A few days after their arrival, the Germans declared Kopechince Jundenrein as well. Everyone in the ghetto understood that this was the end. The night the final action started, the man responsible for the hiding place told Alicia that the bunker was very small, and that if a family had two children, only one could enter. Alicia still had her young brother Herzl, and two boys had their sisters. She begged the man not to tell their parents about the limitation, and she gave her word of honor not to go into the bunker. She hid from her mother. Her mother found her, dragged her to the bunker. Alicia suggested to her mother to go in first and catch her after she closed the opening. When her mother was

inside, Alicia closed the opening. The last thing she heard was a scream of anguish from her mother.

She decided to find a hiding place in the attic. Climbing the ladder she heard a baby cry. Two babies were hidden behind a curtain in one of the rooms. One was crying and one was sleeping. She decided to save the crying baby by giving him drugged tea. The baby fell asleep, but before Alicia had a chance to go up the ladder to the attic, two German S.S. broke in the door to her room. The noise woke both babies. One of the Germans shot the babies through their mouths.

Alicia was taken to the prison yard where she met a beautiful five-year-old girl, her mother, and her toddler brother. The following morning they were shot. Alicia was holding the little girl's hand. In her other hand the girl was holding her doll. Someone was shot behind them and the girl dropped the doll on the sidewalk. A German S.S. man handed the doll to the child. She thanked him and smiled. The German pulled out his gun and shot the girl in the face. Alicia carried her in her arms, crying.

When her turn came to be shot, she hugged the dead child to her heart. Unknown to Alicia, her childhood friend Milek, who was also caught by the Germans, saw her at the side of the grave and called out to her to run. He grabbed a machine gun from a German and started shooting at them. Alicia rolled the little girl into the grave and ran into the forest. She was sure Milek had been killed, however Milek survived and later joined the resistance group Alicia's brother Zachary had organized. They fought the Germans by blowing up trains carrying soldiers and ammunition to the Russian front. Tragically, Milek was killed after the liberation in the fall of 1944 by stepping on a mine.

Alicia faced the German murderers six times during the Holocaust, three times at the cemetery. She is the only survivor of close to 100 members of her family. Her mother and little brother did not survive.

The war in the European theatre ended May 8, 1945, one day before Alicia's 15th birthday. Europe celebrated the end of the war, except for the Jewish survivors of camps, forests and ghettos. In the orphanage in Biesko-Biala in Poland, Alicia and her 27 friends were sitting on the floor crying. For them and their families the end of the war came too late.

The Jews who survived had to leave Poland. Due to political friction and the Polish government under Russian direction, Jews were again used as scapegoats. They were often killed, especially when they tried to return home. A group of very brave Jewish survivors, among them Tzivia Lobatkin and Yitzchok Zukerman, survivors of the Warsaw uprising, organized the "Bricha," a smuggling unit to help the Jews leave Poland and reach Palestine. During the war, Alicia had helped Russian partisans named after the famous major general Kovpak, twice a hero of the Soviet Union. She was given documents by the partisan commander asking all who read the documents to extend her courtesy and help. She used

these documents and became a member of the Bricha.

In the spring of 1947, Alicia, with members of a Belgium orphanage, sailed for Palestine on an illegal ship. Her ship, the Theodore Herzl, was caught by the British, who controlled Palestine and followed the Arab's request not to let Jews in. The people on the ship fought the British boarding party for two hours. Eventually, the British, using tear gas, boarded the ship, and took their vengeance on the 2700 teenagers and younger children. Many were thrown into the ocean and drowned. Many were killed on deck. Alicia still has the pictures the captain of the ship gave her of the coffins being taken off the ship. The survivors were taken to a concentration camp on the island of Cypress near the city of Famagusta. It was the spring of 1947 – Alicia was 16 years old.

In November 1947 the United Nations voted to terminate the British mandate and divide Palestine into a Jewish and Arab homeland. It was a historic moment in the lives of the Jewish people in Palestine as well as in the lives of the Jewish prisoners on Cypress. The following month, Golda Meir (who later became prime minister of Israel), arranged the release of 1000 teenagers from the camps. Alicia was one of them. She was sent to a youth-Aliya school called Mikve Israel (home of Israel). The school was supported by Hadassah, a Jewish woman's group from the United States. Her remark upon entering the gates of the school was "God, this must be paradise."

The Arabs did not accept the United Nations division of Palestine into two homelands. Five million Arabs from all the neighboring countries attacked the Jewish cities and settlements after the British left the country on May 14, 1948. Six hundred fifty thousand Jews, with the help of survivors and volunteers from many countries, fought in Israel's War of Independence from 1948 to 1949. Alicia was a combat soldier in the Palmach, and Palyam (which later became Israel's Navy) for two years.

Alicia married Gabriel Appleman, an American from Brooklyn, who volunteered to fight for the survival of the young state. They were married in 1950, and in 1952, due to his father's illness, Gabriel had to return home. They have three wonderful children and two beautiful granddaughters.

Alicia has written a most incredible book about her journey called "Alicia, My Story." After listening to Alicia's heart-grabbing story, I learned so much about life and its meaning. It is so unbelievably important that these stories of Holocaust survivors are passed on from generation to generation, and I plan to do just that. Alicia taught me to be brave and value life. She is my hero.

Asher

by Michael Sabes

Asher was born in Kosow, Poland on July 30, 1932. Kosow was located in a mostly agricultural, hilly area at the Polish border. Before World War I the region was part of Austria. Today it is part of Ukraine. Half of the town's population of 10,000, at that time, was Jewish.

Asher's early childhood was a very happy one. His early memories include playing in haystacks, running through orchards, and fishing in the nearby river. His family led contented, upper-middle class lives. Asher's father Zvi (Herman) served in the Polish army from 1923 to1925 and later became very successful in the carpet weaving industry. Asher's mother, Yocheved (Eva) Schaller, was born across the border in the town of Viznitz. Asher had a younger sister, Rebecca, four years his junior. At age six, Asher was registered for the local Hebrew school, called the Tarbut (which means "culture"). Asher's future seemed full of potential and pleasure, but unfortunately it did not live up to its promise.

In 1939, the Russian army marched into Kosow, and the town exchanged hands. Now in second grade, Asher went to a Russian school. Russians took over Zvi's business, but other than this, life for the family did not change much. After Hitler attacked Russia in 1941 and the Russian army retreated, Zvi considered moving the family to Russia with the retreating army. However, Yocheved objected so the family stayed in Kosow. By June 1941, the Hungarian army took the place of the Russian military. Fortunately, the Hungarians didn't do anything atrocious. They took payoffs and gifts in return for decent treatment. Zvi continued to work in the business, but it had nearly collapsed. Throughout the summer of 1941, Asher was privately tutored instead of going to school for an education.

The Germans rolled into Kosow in early September. The SS guards started pounding on homes, and shouting, "Jews out." A friend who had seen Jews chased from their homes, met Asher, who was at home with Rebecca and his grandparents. Asher's parents were with his uncle. Since the Germans were supposedly looking for young workers, Asher's father thought the grandparents and children would be okay, and the Germans wouldn't harm them. The Germans didn't differentiate, but they couldn't get everybody.

Asher's grandmother told the two boys to go to Asher's aunt's house across town. When they got there, news reached the house that all Jews were being rounded up to go somewhere. Asher's aunt suggested that the boys hide in the garden instead of the house. While in the garden, they heard some shouting in the house, so they quickly ran down through the huge orchard behind the house and through an even bigger apple orchard that belonged to a Polish person. They decided to hide there under a tree. The owner of the

orchard later ran into the boys and told them to stay there and that he was going to lock the gate to the orchard.

When the security of darkness at sunset was with them, the boys ventured back to the aunt's home and found nobody there. They decided to risk going back to their own homes through downtown, and for an unknown reason they decided to walk on different sides of the street. As he walked, Asher saw a group of people with shovels walking along the street. He then whistled a Polish tune in a confident way as he passed SS guards so that they wouldn't do anything. It takes a great deal of bravery to act so confidently in the face of such danger.

Eventually, Asher reached his home. His grandfather was hidden in a bathtub in the back, and his grandmother and little sister were hidden in the closet. The SS guards knocked on doors and shouted, but when no one responded they did not enter the house. The family waited in hiding until midnight, when Asher's parents knocked on the door. Everyone then went to the attic of a warehouse type building behind the house. While there, the family heard shots, which continued until late through the next morning without interruption. Later the following day, voices over loudspeakers proclaimed that any Jews remaining in their homes could move outside freely. The Germans had killed half of the Jewish population in Kosow. The remaining Jews got together and in a perfect choir chanted the Mourner's Kaddish for those who had perished.

The people with the shovels whom Asher previously saw were digging mass graves for the murdered Jews. The Germans had the Jews undress and stand at the bottom of the hill so that they could not see what happened over the horizon. Once the Jews were below the horizon, the Germans shot them and pushed them into the mass grave. If the Jews were screaming too loudly, the Germans would push them in and then shoot them, or the Jews would be pushed in and left to die.

In the spring of 1942, the Germans demanded that the rest of the population move together into a few blocks that were called a ghetto. Everyday, Jews were removed from the ghetto and never seen again. Asher's family lived in a couple of rooms in an inferior home that had been vacated by a family that had perished. There was not much to do in the ghetto for a child. Asher's parents attempted to get him an education, but the toughest job was trying to find food to survive. Zvi got Ukrainian and Polish friends to smuggle in food for the family. Ghetto life was filled with fear and misery. Everyday people lived without knowing whether or not it would be their day to be taken out and killed. There was a second roundup in a schoolyard for Jews to be registered. Hundreds of Jews decided not to go. All who did go were never seen again.

Zvi decided that the family should not register, so they hid in a secret room in the attic. The Germans said again that people were free to move out of their hiding places, but the family decided not to move. Asher's uncle Baruch, who was a community leader, told Zvi that extermination was inevitable whether they left or stayed. Zvi decided to try to smuggle

the family out of the ghetto in the hope of fleeing to Romania.

Soon, the Germans began to actively search for Jews in the ghetto. When a German SS officer discovered the family, Zvi jumped from the second floor onto the sidewalk. He then yelled for Yocheved to cast Rebecca down to him. Finally Yocheved jumped out and landed on her feet. Somehow Asher ran down the steps and outside. One of the SS officers held a gun to Zvi's head and told him not to take another step. Luckily, a Ukrainian policeman told the SS officer that he would take the family to the local prison. This policeman had been one of Zvi's employees before the war.

When the family went to the local prison, they were put in a cell next to a Jewish family named Lempert. The Lemperts had been caught escaping in Romania and they were deported back to Poland. They were wealthy diamond merchants and said they could have the Romanian prime minister's driver bring them from the border to safety. Zvi convinced the policeman to let them get to a telegraph to contact Warsaw for the Lemperts' assets for their escape. The two families were then smuggled from Poland into Romania. At the border, the families crossed the Chermush River by holding onto ropes at a certain spot. They then waited at a farmhouse until morning when the prime minister's driver came with a limo. He brought them to Chernowitz where the two families finally split in late October 1942.

In Romania, the family lived with Asher's mother's relatives in semi-hiding. If discovered they would have been deported back to Poland like the Lemperts. Asher had to keep a low profile. He quickly learned Romanian on the street. In 1943, Asher's father managed to make contact with the Polish government in London through the U.S. JOINT, an organization that supported refugees. The family then moved to Pitesht and finally to Bucharest.

In 1944, the British government offered a number of certificates to bring Romanian refugees to Palestine. Although Zvi managed to obtain certificates for himself and Yocheved, he was unable to get any for Asher or Rebecca. The children had to travel alone on separate boats from their parents. In August 1944, the family left in three separate boats from the port city of Constanza on the Black Sea. At this point, it was obvious that the Germans were going to lose the war, but Zvi decided to make the trip to Palestine anyway because it was such a great opportunity.

Asher's boat was delayed by a few hours because of engine trouble, but a German U-boat torpedoed the boat with Rebecca onboard. She drowned on August 5, 1944 on the way to Israel. When Asher's boat finally reached the point of interception, the passengers heard screams of some survivors and rescued as many as they could. Asher's boat could not make it all the way to Palestine, so it anchored south of the Bulgarian border. There, the Turkish army took on all the refugees and for a while the refugees traveled in oxen wagons and were fed by the Turkish army until they got to a train station.

The Jewish Agency had already made all the necessary arrangements for the people on Asher's boat to go to Haifa. When Asher finally arrived in Israel, two weeks after he had parted from his family, he hardly recognized his parents whose boat had arrived first. For the first few weeks, the family lived with distant relatives in Tel Aviv until the Jewish Agency arranged for them to have a place of their own.

When the war ended Asher was in school. All the pupils were given the day off and sent home. Asher's friends in school were mostly people born in Israel because he generally shied away from other refugees whose experiences were similar to his. He began school in 7th grade in Israel (which means he missed three grades) but he graduated and was accepted at the municipal high school.

Without telling his parents, Asher decided to join the Haganah and served as a runner during the War of Independence. When he was drafted into the army, Asher passed the exams to go to the Technion to study mechanical engineering. He spent his vacation in Officer Training School. Asher is thankful for having had these exceptional opportunities.

Asher met his wife, Josephine Greenberg, in Tel Aviv before she did her service in the military. Asher and Josephine planned their future in Israel, but circumstances changed their plans. Josephine was sent by the army to do her service at the military attaché's office of the Embassy of Israel in Washington D.C. Asher moved with her to the United States to continue higher studies. He and Josephine married in Washington D.C. Asher later accepted a job offer from General Electric that kept the couple in America. He worked for G.E. for 30 years in New York, California and Switzerland. He is currently retired and lives happily with Josephine in San Jose, enjoying visits with their children and extended families. Asher and Josephine have regularly visited and supported Israel ever since they moved to the United States.

Asher understands the importance of his story, and he knows that it must be told to future generations. When interviewed, he said, "One must assure that [the Holocaust] is not forgotten because history can repeat itself. We have to make sure that our children and our children's children do have the right perspective both historically and in terms of wherever they are…to make sure that whatever happened never, never repeats itself."

David Weinberg

By Michael Chaykin

It was a feeling that only could have been paralleled by the pioneering eyes of Neil Armstrong as he stepped foot on the moon or Woodward and Bernstein as they broke the story of Watergate: the intense pressure of treading on land no man has set foot on before, but the gratification of discovering a wonder that the world has yet to share. Such was my mindset as I went to interview David Weinberg, a quiet man of 70 years old, to hear for the first time his untold story. He was a man who had spent his adult life oppressed by the woes of his past and had never spoken of his youth. Not even his children knew of the horrors that haunted their father. And as he progressed further into his captivating and poignant tale of escape and danger, and the inspiring story of rebuilding his life after the war, I began to realize the burden that I had singularly acquired upon accepting this challenge: a personal obligation to share this man's tale with the rest of the world so it would never be forgotten.

David Weinberg was born into "fairly good" conditions and a warm family in the town of Miedzyrzec Podlacki, 30 miles from Lublin in eastern Poland. The Weinberg family consisted of David, his father, Morry, his mother, Marsha, a brother, Chayim, and two sisters, Cirla and Fagie. Contrary to what I had heard in other accounts of pre-war stories, he described relations between Poles and Jews to be disastrously unstable. Like Daniel Jonah Goldhagen, in his book *Hitler's Willing Executioners*, David pointed out the indifference of the average Polish citizen to the plight of the Jews, and the seeming willingness of the Polish people who were delighted to turn the Jews over to the Nazi authorities. Of course David was respectfully quick to recall the very occasional but exceptional gentile who sacrificed life and safety to save his Jewish neighbor—these extraordinary men and women, real heroes, should be remembered for their willingness to place the improvement of the world over their own lives, mitigating somewhat the horror of the Holocaust. With this brief background, David delved into the beginning of the turmoil.

In 1939, he began, the Germans entered Poland on one front and the Russians another. Upon retreating the Russians offered the Jews of his settlement an opportunity to leave with them and escape the Germans. But as it goes for many of the tragic Holocaust tales, the window of opportunity to escape was unfortunately missed as the tight-knit family vowed to stay together and weather the Nazi storm. Like a captain who valiantly goes down with his ship, David recalls his mother and sisters occupying the house until the last minute of their lives. For the first year, however, life remained in many regards the same for the Jewish people of Miedzyrzec Podlacki, according to David.

To illustrate the monumental change that his hometown underwent, David retrieved a

book from his closet, written in Argentina by survivors of the Holocaust from Miedzyrzec. The town of 25,000 Jews underwent its first change when the Germans came in, grouped the Jews, and shipped them to a labor camp where it was their daily occupation to dig ditches for a year. Then these Jews were sent back home for a short respite before the unrelenting Nazis struck the innocent Jewish population again, this time with a fatal severity.

David recalled the particular event that had taken place and marked the end of the few months of relative tranquility. The Germans removed the most religious of people, the town's rabbis, and tortured them in a series of mandatory public humiliations, taunting them and cutting off their beards. The Nazis, David recalled with horror and almost incredulity, then proceeded to line up the rabbis and shoot each of them in the head as the shocked throng of people looked on. This was the year 1942.

In 1943, the Jews were once again herded and removed from their city. David recalled with particular disgust the treatment of the women and children, especially the way the children were thrust against walls for entertainment. "You could not imagine the situation," David painfully recalled, "but you saw it and … could do nothing about it." At the time, he was 15 years old.

Even at the young age of 15, exposed to the mounting horrors, David surmised the necessity to take action to avoid the inevitable death that awaited him at the concentration camps. During the initial deportation of the Jews from Miedzyrzec he decided to find a place to hide from the German soldiers. He found a spot under his house where he remained separated from his family for three days. He later learned that this entire shipment of Jews had been sent to Treblinka, the notorious death camp, where they all perished. This was his first, and perhaps luckiest escape from certain death.

Life continued like this in six-month periods. Three days of utter fear, with the overwhelming possibility that a family member would be seized and rounded up, were followed by six months of relief, and then the next roundup would occur. Five thousand Jews, he estimated, were displaced each time.

Conditions were brutal as these Jews were taken to the train. Anyone unable to walk was shot on the spot right in the middle of the group, and others were forced to drag the bloody cadavers through the street as the Poles watched. The Polish people were so unsympathetic to the Jews that the Nazis brought Czech Jews to Miedzyrzec because the Polish citizens were more compliant than the Czechs. Poland became the international transfer station for Jews headed to the camps, because the government and the people did so little to stop the Nazis.

At the end of 1943 the Germans committed the final liquidation of Jews from Miedzyrzec, and among this group were David and his family. The family had already been devastated by tragic loss a year earlier. His sister was killed on the spot while returning to the ghetto with food for the family. His elder brother, a carpenter—though innocently

recovering in the infirmary barrack-- was shot in revenge for some other Jews who escaped. The surviving members of the family were taken to the infamous camp Maidanek.

After they were stripped and humiliated, the Jews were packed and shipped aboard the notorious Nazi cattle cars. David recalled people literally dying in front of him on the journey, leaving, along with human fecal matter and urine, a nauseating stench that permeated the car for days. He himself was confident that the trains were headed to Treblinka and feared his end was near, but this group, unlike the rest, ended up at Maidanek, and he again narrowly eluded the grip of death.

Upon arrival, David continued, "the youngsters," those under 20 years like himself, were separated from the elders. The "elders," including his family, were immediately taken to the gas chambers and exterminated. David said he knew right away, intuitively, as soon as the all-too-familiar process of separation began, that it meant the end for one of the groups and the feeling of helplessness, of having "less freedom than a sheep," returned to him.

From Maidanek, David was deported to an ammunition manufacturing plant in Poland along with the other young people. His bitterness toward the abusive and unsympathetic Poles emerged as he described the punishment to which the Jewish slaves at the factory were subjected. Here he and the Jewish youth toiled to produce German arms to supply the war, ironically participating in the battle on the side of his greatest nemesis. Regularly, an overseer came by and lined up the small children outside, killing immediately those he deemed unable to work, and burying them in graves they had themselves dug. Once David was one of five children that survived a lineup of 15, and as he returned back inside he heard the deafening blast of the machine gun, which ended the others' lives. David could explain his survival only by using the word "luck," while pointing up at the heavens. He survived day to day on the encouragement of good German Samaritans who snuck into the camp to give the Jews reports about the outside world. This led David to a statement that bewildered me. What he said was that in his opinion, the average German soldier was sympathetic. Incredibly, he said, his treatment by German soldiers was far better than that by the Polish citizens!

The course of the war began to shift as he worked at the plant, unconscious of the surrounding world, for a pittance of food and no money, at the mercy of the cruel Poles. The Russians began to advance, and consequently the Germans retreated and hid the Jews from the liberating forces. David and his fellow laborers were once again displaced and retreated on order of the Nazis to Buchenwald inside the German border.

At Buchenwald the routine of labor continued but the conditions worsened. Whole meals consisted only of potato peels. Not only could this not adequately nourish the prisoners, but thousands also contracted dysentery, and David remembered piling masses of dead bodies on top of each other every morning, before the regular labor could begin. This epidemic plagued the prisoners, who were emaciated and had no resources to combat

disease. David estimated that it might have eradicated more people in Buchenwald than the Nazis. With no time wasted for the trail of decimated corpses left behind, the authorities shipped the remainder of the Buchenwald Jews farther from the Russian border, to another camp, Nordhausen.

Nordhausen, which David reached in 1945, intrigued him. It was located at the site of the laboratory of scientist Vernher von Braun and he describes it as " an entire city, inside of a mountain." At this point however, so close to liberation that he saw American bombers flying overhead every day, he injured his leg. Unable to walk, he was left for dead in the barracks. He owes his life, he said, to the fact that the liberation happened so soon thereafter or he would have died there.

Finally, the resolution, but certainly not the end to David's story came about. The Americans liberated Nordhausen, and when he came to this part of the story, David's entire demeanor changed to one of delight and nostalgia. He chuckled as he recalled the absolute euphoria and shock that pervaded the camp when someone shouted "there are Americans here!" The German soldiers were rooted out and shot by the American soldiers, and the Jews were freed.

This begins the final stretch of David's story, which I personally found most uplifting and inspiring: the way David turned the most miserable of situations into a successful life. I wondered how he got from somewhere in Germany, a poor, emaciated wretch, to San Jose, California, and was amazed with admiration as he separated himself from his past and began a new life.

After the Americans liberated the camp they signed a pact in which they turned it over to the Russians. They gave the survivors the choice of leaving with them to make way for the Russians, or remaining at the camp. David seized this opportunity, not wanting to return to his roots in Poland, but instead to move on. The Americans assembled the refugees in another camp ("I wouldn't really call this a camp," he joked) and allowed them to apply to different countries including Israel and the United States. David decided that he wanted to go to the United States. As he waited for his visa to be granted, David worked in the mess hall for the American army for five years until the Joint Distribution Committee sponsored him in 1949. I asked him if he was given a choice of where in the United States he would live, and he joyfully remembered deciding instantly on California once the JDC described it to him. He had found the ideal place to begin a new life.

I asked him about the time he spent in Frankfort before coming to the United States, and about the sentiments he experienced when coming into contact with ordinary Germans. Extraordinarily, he was able to accept them and even remembers them as friendly people who opened their houses to him, just two years after the war had ended. The average German, I realized from hearing this, has been given a much undeserved label when it comes to treatment of Jews during the war. These people were victims themselves, ravaged by the awful Nazi scourge and were often helpless as well. The character of the German people

shone through their efforts to assist the Jews after the war, when they could, according to David's report. He mentioned the many Germans who were put into the concentration camps and suffered along with the Jews.

Once in San Jose, David got a job at the Paul Masson Winery. A friend from Los Angeles introduced him to a woman from Mexico, Elena, who became his wife after six months of dating. They have been married for 40 years and have two sons, Morry, who lives in New York, and Isaac, who lives in San Francisco.

After my interview with David Weinberg, my anti-Nazi sentiments grew deeper and in the car on the way home I expressed outward anger at their wicked transgressions. But then I thought of David, who lived it and literally knew he was going to die, and my anger felt gratuitous. This was a man whose mother and father were gassed, brother and sister were shot, and other relations slowly killed off, and yet he could only express the deepest sympathies for the Germans who were unwillingly wrapped up in this debacle. From this I once again derived the theme I found from this interview. In spite of the most deplorable and unfathomable tragedies, human beings can persevere and find joy again in life. If an inspiration or lesson can be drawn from such a sickening epic it is that these survivors became a force of good in spite of the horrors to which they were subjected. In other words, Hitler in trying to eliminate them, failed to seize their boundless spirit, and instead molded David Weinberg and his fellow survivors into living testaments to the goodness of mankind.

Ellen Ruth Powers

By Andy Drukarev

Although I was hesitant to begin, deciding to participate in this Holocaust remembrance project was a very rewarding choice. I learned that there is a lot more to the holocaust than just the camps and Nazi's. Listening to Ellen-Ruth's story really gave me a perspective as to more of a truth of the holocaust. Overall, it was a very rewarding experience that I will not forget.

Ellen-Ruth Powers was born as the only child to Bernhard and Elise Wolfsohn in Berlin, Germany, in 1921. Her father owned a jewelry shop. When her mother worked, she was a musician, and later sold on credit. Growing up, Ellen-Ruth was always at the head of her class in school. Ellen-Ruth's family belonged to a conservative synagogue in Berlin, and in general seemed to live a comfortable life.

However, all of this started to change in 1933, the year Hitler forced himself into power, when Ellen-Ruth was twelve. At first, there weren't really any noticeable changes. However, come 1936 and 1937, things started to change. Up until this point, Ellen-Ruth's relationship with other non Jews in her area was very good. With the exception of one, all of her friends were not Jewish. In fact, aside from going to synagogue, she had very little interaction with other Jews. As was the case for many German Jews, Ellen-Ruth's mother did not feel that Hitler could possibly stay in power. She had a lot of pride in her country, and she ignored the signals for quite a while.

In the year 1937, Ellen-Ruth's family really started to feel the impact of the Hitler's regime. She was forced to quit her normal, secular school to attend a Jewish school, which she had to travel all the way across Berlin to attend. Aside from the obvious, the only clear difference between these two schools was the secular school was stricter than the Jewish school. She also noticed that the Jewish students were much stronger academically than the non Jews at her previous schools, and she really had to work to keep at the top of her class. One day in 1938, Ellen-Ruth recalls that she was sick for a day during school. The next day when she went into school, half of the children at the school were no longer there. Hitler's regime had taken them away. At this time, everything was scary. The newspapers came out with horrible things about Jews that were widely believed. Ellen-Ruth remembers being very scared. During that time, Ellen-Ruth recalls that all the children, "had to grow up real fast."

In September of 1939, the war started. At this time, Ellen-Ruth's family realized that they needed to leave the country. So, they decided to leave for Shanghai by way of ship. She had lived in Berlin for all seventeen years of her life before leaving the country, however she

did move houses. However, the ship they were planning to go on was delayed by a month. However, the ship eventually did arrive, and fortunately for Ellen-Ruth and her mother, they left the country in the latter part of 1939. At this time, her parents were divorced, and Ellen-Ruth's father had already left. However, the journey was not an easy one. The ship that they had boarded was German, and they made a stop in Africa for provisions. Here, they dropped off all of the passengers in the mountains in bloodied tents. Shortly thereafter, everybody but the Jews left to return to their native countries because of the difficulty of life. However, the remaining Jews gutted it out, and eventually, an Italian ship picked them up, and dropped them off in Shanghai. At the time, Italy was still neutral. Ellen-Ruth lived in Shanghai from 1940 – 1947. This was most definitely not an easy time for her and her family. When she first arrived there, she wanted to live with her father, but that did not work out. So, because she was over eighteen, she started living on her own. Life was actually more or less comfortable for a couple of years, until the Japanese invaded. During these years, Ellen-Ruth met and married her first husband. They went on to have three kids before they were divorced. The time of the Japanese invasion was a very gruesome time for those living in China. Jewish refugees, along with some other Chinese were placed in a specific, very dirty area of town that was effectively a ghetto. Ellen-Ruth recalls finding babies in garbage cans, and seeing dead people lying in the streets. One of the hardest times in the ghetto for Ellen-Ruth was when her father was imprisoned. Ellen-Ruth's father loved to play cards, and it was reported by a snitch to the Chinese government that Ellen-Ruth's father was gambling. As a result, he was thrown into a dirty Chinese jail, with little to eat or drink. Luckily, the family was able to get enough money together to have her father released when she moved to the United States. At the time, Ellen-Ruth really had little knowledge of what was happening to fellow Jews, like her old classmates in concentration camps. She recalls prisoners who were able to leave the camps responding to questions by saying, "Please don't talk to me." They were very scared. She also recalls feeling very guilty because while she was long out of Germany, and alive, many of her fellows were near death in concentration camps.

In 1947, Ellen-Ruth moved to the United States. She arrived in San Francisco, but moved to Los Angeles, and lived there until 1955, when she moved to the bay area. She has lived in the bay area since 1955, with the exception of two years when she lived in Utah. The emotional impact of the holocaust was gigantic for many people who lived to survive it. She feels that the only thing that has kept her alive and emotionally stable during her life has been keeping her sense of humor. Nevertheless Ellen-Ruth's experience in the holocaust is definitely something that has affected her life forever.

Eva Maiden

By Esther Teplitsky

"The Nazi plan of harassment and taking away every human right and every opportunity was like a noose being slowly tightened around the neck of the whole Jewish community."

The death camps and public humiliation of the Holocaust are over, but its effects live on in the generations of people still suffering from broken families, difficult relationships, and painful memories. These effects will diminish over time, but the stories must live on to prevent history from repeating itself.

Eva Wenkart Maiden was born in 1935 in Vienna, Austria. She lived in a large apartment in the second district, a neighborhood nicknamed "Matzo Island." The medical offices of both her parents were in this same apartment. She led a normal childhood life in "a blur of busy-ness" with her parents, brother, aunt, maid, and cook. Her aunt, Valerie Taubes, admitted the parents' patients. Her father, Dr. Simon Wenkart, worked half time for the city of Vienna as a coroner, and in a clinic for poor people. Her mother, Dr. Antonia Wenkart, a pediatrician, also volunteered one day a week serving food and offering medical services to poor people. They were constantly busy. Her brother, Helmut attended a public school and spent his time in a boys club and playing with the other children in their building. Eva went to a Montessori nursery school where she happily took care of her little locker and all her belongings marked with her trademark picture of a snail.

Her parents were born in Poland. Both of their families had moved to Vienna for a better life. In Poland, Eva's mother had experienced many pogroms and had to run from village to village to escape from Cossacks. She was born in 1896 and came to Vienna in 1912 as a 16-year-old, almost ready for university. Eva's father immigrated to Vienna as a toddler, so he was a Viennese gentleman, while her mother was a young Polish girl trying to adjust to Austrian life. They met in medical school, had a long courtship and engagement, and were married a long time before they felt they were financially prepared to have children. The years just before the Holocaust were a very satisfying time in their lives because they had finally achieved their goals of having two children, making a good living, gaining some measure of security, and becoming integrated into Viennese life.

The members of Eva's family were very liberal Jews. Her father went to synagogue only on High Holy Days, while her mother not at all, but they were strong in their Jewish identity. It was customary for them to have a Seder on Passover and to light candles during Hanukkah.

As a child, Eva was too young to have any understanding of possible tensions between

Jews and gentiles. Her parents were respected as they were constantly serving the community. Her father held office in the Socialist Democratic Party. This was the party of most Jews, especially the intellectuals. Overnight, their lives changed forever with the Anschluss.

On March 13, 1938, the Nazis marched into Austria in a mass movement. They announced that there would be an election to see whether the Austrian people were willing to be annexed to Germany. The Austrian economy had been very depressed, which resulted in high unemployment among young men, many of whom had turned into hooligans. Many people were dissatisfied with their working and living conditions and were ready for any change. It seemed that a majority of the people were in favor of being annexed, but the Nazis also intimidated people and made them frightened to vote against annexation. On Election Day, Eva's nanny was all smiles. She told Eva that it was a big day so she was going to take her to a parade. Eva was told to put on her best dress. When she went into the living room to say goodbye to her mother, her mother became enraged with the nanny, which had never happened before. Her mother told the nanny to go away. She sat Eva down and told Eva that she was *not* going out today or even standing on the balcony, which had been a favorite habit of their family. The windows and curtains were shut. The atmosphere of fear made Eva feel strange and scared. Nevertheless, she returned to her pleasant nursery school the next day. Her life stayed in a sort of cocoon in the middle of this situation. She knows now from family stories what happened to her parents from the very beginning, but at the time, she was oblivious to it all.

Her father went to his government office for his duties as a coroner and arrived to see his boss in full Nazi uniform within the first week after the Anschluss. His boss looked up into the air and asked, "Is that Jew Wenkart still here? He thinks he's working here? He doesn't have a job here." Her father came home feeling terribly humiliated. She feels that to a degree, he never recovered from that blow. Before, he had been lively and highly conversational. He became depressed and his personality changed.

Life for the Jews was horrible because the police were in complete collusion with the Nazis, so not only were individual people anti-Semitic, but the government and the police also joined in. Now private citizens, juvenile delinquents and hoodlums could do whatever they wanted to Jewish people and the police would do absolutely nothing about it. Jewish people could be beaten up on the streets without consequences. Soon, arrests began. The police secretary, one of Eva's father's patients, called to warn Eva's father that he was on the first list of people to be arrested because he was politically prominent. He was told to disappear for a while. He went into hiding many times in the home of his friend Dr. Lande. He hid in the large pantry closet and was saved by Dr. Lande's Catholic wife. Each time an S.S. officer knocked on their door Mrs. Lande came out with her rosary beads, asked why he was interrupting her at prayer, and told him to please go away. In this way, her father was saved many times over.

Eventually, the Jewish children were thrown out of public school. At first, Nazi teachers would replace Jewish ones. During this time, a friend of Eva's brother was locked in the

coatroom without water or toilet facilities, first thing in the morning. The teacher told her brother that the same thing would happen to him if he tried to unlock his friend. When the Jewish children were finally kicked out, her brother transferred to a Jewish day school.

By July, every Jewish household was ordered to send a list of their possessions, investments, and bank accounts to the government. The Germans then confiscated these. This was so well documented that the records still remained a few years ago, so Eva was able to receive restitution and a letter of apology for mistreatment from the Austrian government.

Around this same time, an epidemic of scarlet fever hit Vienna. All the Jewish doctors had their licenses cancelled by this time so they could not earn a living. Therefore, there was nobody to treat the sick children. Her mother came up with a good plan. She took a lengthy walk each night through the Jewish section of Vienna with a big black purse filled with medicines and a stethoscope. She would visit the children who had scarlet fever, both her own patients and those of other doctors who couldn't practice. In this way, Eva's mother saved many people's lives, some of whom Eva encountered later in her life while living in New York.

At this point, there was an edict that Jewish people should leave. Of course, if they had had a place to go, money or tickets, and if some country wished to admit them, most would have gone. Often those conditions were not met. First, they no longer had money. Secondly, it was hard to obtain visas to enter another country. So, it was not exactly easy to leave.

"The steps of harassment and taking away every human right and every opportunity were like a noose being slowly tightened around the neck of the whole Jewish community," recalled Eva. To get the full picture, you have to understand that what happened in Germany between 1933 and 1939 happened to Austria in six to nine months. The Nazis had learned to confiscate everything from the Jews, round them up and deport them during the course of that six-year period in Germany, so they were able to efficiently carry out these steps in merely nine months in Austria. At that time, there were concentration camps, but these were not yet killing camps. Austrian men who were arrested were eventually sent to Dachau and Buchenwald. Fortunately, this did not happen to Eva's father. One of her uncles, though, was in Dachau. The families of these men were told that the men would be released if they bought a ticket and left the country during a very short, specified period of time.

After a while, Eva could no longer go to her nursery school. Her mother was no longer working. As the pressures by the Nazis increased, her mother tried many ways to get the family out of the country. It wasn't safe for her father to be on the streets, so it was she who went to many different consulates to try to obtain visas. She would take Eva by the hand and stand in line for an entire day. Sometimes they would not get to the front of the line. That just meant that they would wake up even earlier the next day and wait in line again. Day after day, the answer was no, they had no more visas for Jews. Most preferred America, which had a sort of lottery, for which you needed a "low number." Their family

of four did not have a low number. The unmarried aunt had a low number, but she would never dream of leaving without the rest of the family. It was possible to get to Shanghai without a visa, and many Austrian Jews moved there, but her parents really did not want to go to a country where they could not speak the language. They wanted to be able to adapt to the culture of the new country and become physicians again.

One day, Eva's mother was arrested and put onto a small crowded truck with other Jewish women. There were Nazi soldiers driving to the outskirts of Vienna. Two officers agreed that she was pretty, so they dumped her out the back of the truck. She walked back home half the night and never learned the fate of the other women on that truck. This was a normal occurrence. The aunt was to benefit from similar luck half a year later. Often the fate of Holocaust survivors was due to luck.

November 13, 1938 was the famous pogrom, Kristallnacht, which is German for "the night of the broken glass." This day was filled with great harassment of the Jews. Her brother was in the park in Vienna with their nanny. He went to play where there were signs on the grass that read "no dogs or Jews allowed." A Nazi saw him and brought him to a police station where Helmut, an eight-year old child, was tortured. He was asked where his family kept their gold because that was the propaganda, that all Jewish families hid their gold somewhere.

A relative of Eva's mother finally provided an affidavit and four tickets, which allowed the family to leave for Switzerland. They were happy, but also sad as they left behind many dear family members who remained to face the danger. They were allowed to take very little cash, and only allowed to take a certain size box out of Austria. Eva had to decide between Pooh, her teddy bear, and Emily, her doll, because they could not both fit. In the morning, her mother dressed her with many layers, hiding jewelry in between. She was told to make sure that no German would touch her so that the jewelry would not be discovered. At such a young age, Eva already began to feel responsible for her unhappy mother, beaten down brother, and sickly father.

Because Eva's father was very ill, he went into a nursing home as soon as the family arrived in Switzerland. A Jewish agency was placing immigrants into the homes of Swiss Jews. The family that was willing to take them in would only accept Eva and her mother. Her mother felt that she had no choice but to put her son in an orphanage. The orphanage was Catholic and there was a cross in every room, which was scary for the brother because of the negative things associated with it. Eva and her mother lived in a small dreary room, while Eva's mother tried to look for work in this German part of Switzerland.

It was general policy to not allow immigrants to work, but instead to encourage them to move on. Antonia Wenkart had to report to the alien police periodically. She managed to get a job at a candy factory illegally, and sometimes she brought back a few pieces of candy for dinner. With any extra money they had, they went on the train to visit either the father or brother. Eva started acting cute to the host family so that they would invite

her to dinner. After six months, Eva's father and brother joined them, and now the whole family lived in one room. They did not get along well because of the low morale and poor living conditions. Another year and a half passed in this manner. During this period, Eva's aunt was able to get to the United States from Austria. She managed to get the money, sponsorship, and visas necessary for Eva's family to board the S.S. Rex, the last passenger ship from Italy to America before war was declared.

Life in America was not easy either. Her parents had one goal, which was to become physicians again, but first they had to learn English as well as a large medical vocabulary and American medical practices. A Jewish social agency gave them some money for about two and half years until they could pass their exams to become doctors again and be self-sufficient. At this time, family life still could not return to normal. Her brother became more emotionally disturbed and difficult. He was hard for her parents to manage and Eva had a hard time getting along with him, especially since they often shared a room. His traumatic experiences of being tortured as an eight-year old and living in an orphanage had changed his life forever.

Eva's parents made an important contribution to their new community. Back in Vienna when they were in university, they attended lectures of Sigmund Freud and other important psychoanalysts. After practicing pediatrics for a few years in New York, Eva's mother decided to switch fields, went through training and was psychoanalyzed herself. She was then able to earn a good living. Her father then also went into this field, but he did not make as much money because he spent much of his time helping poor people. Eva's mother became the dean of a psychoanalytic institute and founded an important clinic. During their lifetime, their careers flourished in New York City.

For Eva, life was always better outside of the home. From a young age, she spent a large part of her time with her friends and their mothers who had free time. She was always proud of her parents, but not very close to them.

After having lived only nine months under German occupation the emotional effects on Eva's family were very deep. This trauma and growing up around therapists caused Eva to go into the field of mental health. She worked first as a school psychologist, especially for the most disadvantaged children, because she understood their issues. She never told them her story but they could tell that she understood them. She worked with Cambodian and Vietnamese refugee children and she could understand their issues with immigration. She could understand the black children's' problems with prejudice and oppression. After her own children went to college, she became a marriage and family therapist. After a while, she realized that she had worked with nearly every minority group in Santa Clara County, but she had not worked with Holocaust survivors. She then became the executive director of the organization Tikvah, which sought out frail and challenged older survivors to help them get services that they need. Today, Eva works with Jewish Family Service, where she runs a support group for Holocaust survivors and assists them with restitution claims. Eva's two sons were always her highest priority. She is proud that she balanced

being an active professional and an active mother.

From being forced to scrub cobblestones with toothbrushes to being killed in gas chambers, the horror stories of the Holocaust are endless. Throughout this time, there was a lot of courage shown by both Jews and non-Jews, which has inspired many. Eva is writing about her life because she would like to encourage following generations reading her story to be as resilient as possible.

Frank Gusdorf

By David Linder

The Holocaust was the state-sponsored, systematic persecution and annihilation of European Jewry by Nazi Germany and its collaborators. Among the many people who suffered this horrible genocide, including homosexuals, gypsies, and prisoners of war, the Jews were the Nazi's primary victims; six million Jews were murdered. Fortunately, some Jews successfully escaped the evil clutches of the Nazis. They fled persecution by any means possible. Several months ago, it was my pleasure to interview Frank Gusdorf. Frank was one of those who successfully escaped. He endured some terrible times. Frank was rescued via the Kindertransport.

Frank was born in Worms, Germany. His family was engaged in cabinet making and furniture manufacturing. Frank's father was not only a prominent furniture manufacturer, but also a veteran of World War I, an enthusiastic athlete, and a member of the Jewish community. Since the Gusdorf family had been settled in Germany for several hundred years, they were assimilated into German culture, and they affiliated themselves as Reform Jews. The Gusdorfs belonged to an architecturally interesting temple with a 990-year history. Frank attended Sunday school weekly, and spent time with his grandparents on the High Holy Days. Life seemed precious. Unfortunately, it would soon begin to change.

Frank started to notice anti-Semitism playing a larger role in society. There were parades which degraded the Jewish community with anti-Semitic slogans and graffiti which appeared on walls. Frank was forced to transfer schools because the other children were constantly teasing him for being a Jew. Suddenly, on November 9, 1938, Kristelnacht happened. On 10 November, Frank's father was arrested and the Gusdorf home was vandalized. That morning, Frank was on his way to school when a teacher told him to go home. The Nazis had set his historic synagogue on fire and had thrown ancient Torahs out of the stained glass windows. Frank's mom knew that it was time to move out of the house and live somewhere else. Luckily, Frank, his mother, and his sister found sanctuary in a vacated house where a Jewish couple had committed suicide. They lived in this house with other members of the family. Each day, Frank's mother went to the Gestapo, pleading for her husband's release. While they did release Frank's uncle, they failed to release his father, although Frank's mother showed the police that her husband was a veteran who earned an iron cross award. A couple of weeks later, Frank's mother received a package in the mail. This package was filled with some of Frank's father's personal belongings, his wallet, and ashes. Frank's father died at Buchenwald concentration camp.

In 1939, Frank became one of the 10,000 Jewish children who boarded the Kindertransport to be shipped to England. His mother, sister, and grandfather stayed behind

in Germany; Frank would rejoin them in the United States. Frank spent the next two years studying in England. He attended Macaulay House College, in Cuckfield, Sussex, a boarding school, which was surrounded by the view of the lush countryside, large lawns, meadows, and tress. Although Frank enjoyed studying in England, in 1941 he traveled to the United States and met up with his family. Frank continued his higher education in the United States and then joined the United States Army. Frank found military service to his liking. It provided him with education while concurrently serving his newly adopted country. In the military, Frank distinguished himself as an outstanding soldier and leader. He instructed officers in electronics and weapon familiarization and served in many locations such as Europe, Korea, and Panama.

Shortly after the war had ended, Frank revisited Germany. There, he met his wife Ursula whom he married in 1952. Ursula was another Jew who had survived the war by hiding. The two of them had three children. In 1966, Frank retired from the military and pursued a career as an electrical engineer for various high-tech companies. He was an excellent athlete who participated in many marathons. Frank settled in the Bay Area where he still lives today. Frank currently lives in the hills of Los Gatos and enjoys painting and taking hikes in the outdoors. His deep admiration for nature is clearly reflected in his artwork.

Overall, interviewing Frank Gusdorf has been such an inspiring opportunity for me. His story while painful is also uplifting. Though Frank had suffered many harsh times, I consider him a hero, and I am glad that I had the opportunity to interview him.

George Denes

By Elliot Fine

"Never give up." These are the words of an exceptionally brave man who has seen and endured the absolute worst of humanity. These words came from a man named George Denes, who is a Holocaust survivor. This is his story.

George Denes was born September 9, 1936 in Budapest, Hungary. His name originally was Deutsch Gyorgy. It was changed to Denes once he graduated with an MSEE from electrical engineering school in Hungary in order to alleviate anti-Semitic feelings against German sounding Jewish family names. (The German sounding family names were given in addition to the Hebrew names by the most enlightened Emperor Joseph II of Austria-Hungary. A ruler far ahead of his time, he gave these names to all Jews of the Austro-Hungarian Empire in 1778 in order to emancipate them as full citizens of the Empire.)

George lived in Budapest with his brother Tom (three years older) and his parents father Sandor Deutsch and mother Hermine Deutsch (Steckler).

In 1941, Hungary allied with Nazi Germany and declared war on the U.S.A., Great Britain and Russia. In March 1944 Germany decided that Hungary could not leave the Axis Alliance so the Germans occupied Hungary almost overnight. George remembered as a young boy walking along a main boulevard in Budapest and then in an instant, seeing the large German tiger tanks rolling down the streets accompanied by German soldiers marching in formation wearing their shiny boots and holding machine guns.

The Nazi occupation of Hungary began immediately after this. The new Nazi Hungarian government implemented all of the Nazis' horrible laws and regulations. The Nazis were always highly organized. "They came with a list" George said, "a list of all the Jews," undesirables, communists and socialists, and immediately rounded them up. This took place on March 19, 1944. Following this day all hell broke loose. Young and old, Jewish women and men, were sent away, brutally separated from family and friends and sent to death camps such as Auschwitz, Maidanek, Treblinka, and Birkenau. Whole communities were sent off by train to be gassed by cyanide and burned in the crematoriums of the death camps.

George's father was a part of what the Hungarians called the forced slave labor army. The Hungarians would never allow Jews to serve in the regular army, because they did not trust the Jews. Sandor Deutsch served on the Russian front. There the slave army did all the labor and dirty work such as digging trenches, or picking up the landmines in advance of the "glorious" German and Hungarian armies. George's father was injured

when a friend stepped on a mine. The injury affected his nervous system and he contracted epilepsy. He survived, however, and because of this injury, was sent back from the front.

As a family, the Deutsches decided that they had to do something. In Budapest, the Germans and the Hungarian Nazis were rounding up the Jews to be killed. The Jews were either taken to the slaughterhouses, which by this time were no longer myths, shot on the spot by the Danube River or in the streets.

During the war, people knew about the death camps. They knew that if they were taken away, they would never be seen again. So the Deutsches decided to do what they could to evade the Nazis. George's mother took a job taking care of a dying Christian woman, the wife of a Hungarian aristocratic general. This was a good job because the Nazis would not expect a Jewish woman to have this job. George's father took his two sons to a day care center up in the hills that posed as a boarding school. The real purpose of the center, however, was to hide and protect the Jewish children. George and Tom stayed there for a few weeks until the Nazis figured out the subterfuge.

During this time there were constant bombings throughout the city as the Soviets were beginning to encircle Budapest. Before the Hungarian Nazis could capture the two brothers and the family, George's father got them out of the day care center, only to be captured again by the Hungarian Nazis. So the three were sent to a Hungarian "Nazi House" prison and kept in a disgusting basement. At this time George was eight years old and Tom was eleven. Here George discovered the first of several war horrors, a whole courtyard of murdered Jews and Russia partisans. There was no room left to put the dead, so the Nazis stacked them like wood.

George's father was constantly trying to figure out how to escape. The Nazis took George, Tom and their father to the River Danube, lined them up with other people and started to shoot the Jews, one by one. George remembers looking up into his father's eyes and asking if it was going to hurt. Imagine being a father and having your eight-year old son ask you that question?

As the line started to diminish a German Nazi regular army patrol came up and told the Hungarian Nazis to stop what they were doing, not because they were committing horrible murder, but because this killing site was located next to a bridge strapped with dynamite to prevent the Russians from crossing the river, and could possibly explode. Imagine being saved for that horrible reason? This was a true miracle. The weird thing was that for a man who does not believe in miracles, many happened to him.

After this horrifying experience George's father was further convinced that the Nazis had absolutely no consideration for human life, and so he thought up a daring escape plan. George's father worked in the Hungarian Nazi House as a slave, and while he was there he found a ladder in the courtyard. He thought he would sneak his family out of the prison by climbing over the courtyard wall with the ladder.

Now the ladder was about three feet too short, so Sandor put a box under it so it would reach high enough. George went over the wall and then George's father. But as his brother Tom started to go over, he fell, and could not complete the climb. So George and his father both had to climb back. Right away the three were caught by the Hungarian Nazis. The Nazis beat them really badly, and locked them all up.

Later George, Tom and Sandor were taken out to bring artesian water to the Hungarian Nazis with buckets (the water supply was shut off due to the siege of the city by the Soviet army). In the old town part of the City of Budapest there were a lot of back alleys, and as the Deutsches were making the water delivery they ran into a side alley and got away.

They wanted to go to George's mother, who was all the way on the other side of town where she was working. Bullets and artillery shells were flying each and every way. On one side, the Germans were saying, "halt" and on the other, only a couple of blocks away, the Russians where saying "stoi." But they somehow got through and found George's mother. With the whole family together, they crept to the nice part of Budapest where they hid in the basement of an old house that had been formerly owned by aristocrats who had fled.

The family was literally starving because of the lack of food. The only way to survive was to come out and search for scraps in abandoned or ruined houses during large air raids, when the Nazis would be hiding in bunkers. During these air raids they would risk their lives for just scraps of small beans that they would have to eat for days. From that abandoned basement they waited until the Nazis were run out of town by the advancing Soviet army.

In 1956 George, as a first year university student participated in the uprising against the Soviet communist rule in Hungary. In 1968 he and his first wife, Judith, and their three year old son, Robert, defected from communist Hungary to Austria, risking great danger. They came to the U.S.A. as political refugees in 1968.

George currently lives with his third wife, Judy Denes, who is also a childhood survivor of the Holocaust from Poland. He is an electrical engineer, with a specialty in product and reliability engineering in the semiconductor industry. George's brother Tom still lives in Hungary.

George believes he survived this horrible time only to be able to tell others what really happened and so that the Holocaust will never be forgotten!

Gerhard Maerker

By Jonathan Michael Harris

Talking to my grandfather about Nazi Germany was a revelation for me. I had known that he was one of the few lucky ones to escape Nazi Germany with their life and their personal belongings. However, I hadn't realized how hard it must have been for anyone to live in that time, even for those who left early. They were unable to do anything as their family and friends back in Germany were slaughtered. They came to this country with hardly any English, with even less money, and no easy way of support. From this, my grandfather learned English, put himself through school, then graduate school, and became renowned in his profession. This experience has given me a rare glimpse into my grandfather's early life and that of pre-WWII Germany. I knew all about the Holocaust, but I never before really understood what it meant to have to rebuild your life from scratch.

My early childhood in Bernburg, Germany was a happy one. In my family there were five of us: me, my dog Lumpy; my sister Inge, and Father and Mother. My parents owned a store that sold ladies goods such as stockings, etc. We lived in a big house behind the store. My dog, Lumpy, a very friendly dachshund, was a very special friend of mine. He usually could be found lying on a mat in front of the store. He always begged for food at the dinner table. My sister, Inge, is three years older than me. She was in high school when the Nazis took over. She went to the high school for a little while but then went to a household in another city to learn to cook and clean. There was an entrance door right next to the store, steps going up to Grandma's apartment and back steps going up to our apartment. Inside the apartment there were two hallways, one went to the kitchen and the other went to my parents' bedroom. We had a maid who helped clean the house. Outside of the house there was a garden. In the garden there was a pear tree that I liked to climb. I had a basket that I used to pull up a book so that I could sit in the tree and read. We also had an apple tree, a shed where coal was stored and a porch with a roof over it where we used to eat.

My family was not very religious. We didn't keep kosher, or Shabbat. On Hanukah, we lit candles and on Passover, we had seders at friends' houses. For seder we would go to the Cohen's. They had three children and eventually went to Israel with their three daughters. The next year we would go to the Stern's for seder. They had two children and eventually they moved to Chile.

The Jewish community in Bernburg was rather small, only 50-60 families. Some were orthodox. The rabbi at our synagogue was named Rabbi Jungmann. At synagogue the men and women were seated separately, women in the balcony and men on the ground floor. There was a choir and we never had any trouble getting a minyan. I remember my Bar Mitzvah fairly well. It was in Bernburg, Germany in 1936. It was a very festive occasion.

We had someone come over and cook dinner at our house. All my friends were there, as well as my Uncle Paul, Uncle Otto and the rest of the family.

When the Nazis came to power, my childhood became quite difficult. I went to normal grade school before the Nazis took over. I was ten years old and had a very good time. We sang and played. I had a very good music teacher. My best friend was one of the girls from the Sterns family. I had several other friends; one was the son of a plumber, the other was the son of a store owner that was around the corner. After the Nazis came to power the boys joined the Hitler youth. After joining, they were no longer my friends. My non-Jewish friends refused to play with me, and called me "dirty Jew" and things like that. My only other boy friend had a garden not far from his house. We liked going out there to pick gooseberries. It was pretty lonesome, not having any friends.

After the Nazis took over my world changed completely. When I was ten or eleven, I finished grammar school and went to a gymnasium for high school. I had a Latin teacher who wore a swastika arm band. He hated Jews, which was not very encouraging to a Jewish kid with average grades like me. Every morning, the school raised a swastika flag and sung the proper Nazi songs. I hid in the bathroom because I didn't want to have to sing the songs. My first memory of Nazis is pretty grim. Trucks full of Nazis in uniforms were riding on streets with flags on trucks. It was pretty scary. There was a second encounter with Nazis that I remember. One day I came home and found Nazis in front of our store carrying swastika flags. I was too scared to ring the bell to be let in because the Nazis blocked the door. Luckily for me, there was a neighbor who was Jewish. She called my mother and told her to open the door for her son. My father finally sold his store— I doubt he got a very fair price for it— and continued selling his goods privately to customers who were Jewish sympathizers. He had to visit them secretly during the night.

We decided that we had to leave. So we sold our house and the belongings that we weren't going to take with us. I had to leave Lumpy at a friend's house. We were one of the few families that got out while getting out was still possible. We decided to go to Mainz, on the Rhine River in Eastern Germany for two reasons. The first reason was because that was where my grandparents lived. The second was because we had heard that it was easier to get a visa to the United States there. We had a rich uncle who sponsored our visa and other relatives who lived in the United States. There was a Jewish school in Mainz that was part of the synagogue that my grandparents belonged to. I attended the school for one year the period that we lived in Mainz.

In 1938, we took a train to Hamburg, which was the embarkation point. I enjoyed the boat trip very much. My sister and I amused ourselves by exploring the ship, although I often became sea-sick. When we finally got to New York, the uncle who had sponsored our visa picked us up. We went to Philadelphia and lived in his house with his family for several months. My uncle had three daughters. For a short while after arriving in the United States, we were able to keep in touch with our family and friends in Germany. We learned about Kristalnacht after we arrived in the United States.

Soon letters became more infrequent. More family members left Germany. Cousin Ruth and Uncle Kurt went to Argentina. Uncle Kurt, like my father, fought for Germany in World War I. Uncle Kurt had been wounded in that war. The Nazis didn't care about Jewish World War I veterans, so Uncle Kurt had to flee and was lucky to get to Argentina. My father's brother and mother were not so lucky. My grandmother was sent to Terezienstadt and died there. My father's brother, Otto, was married to a gentile woman and lived in Berlin. He was sent to a concentration camp and died there but his daughter and son left on a children's transport out of Germany and went to Sweden.

Since the war, I have gotten back in touch with my cousins Margot and Horst. They have very interesting stories of how they left Germany and were raised by Swedish families. Because Sweden is very far, we visit only occasionally, but we correspond with each other. I had a third cousin who died when he was only 16, but I don't remember how.

It was very difficult for my parents to leave my grandparents behind in Germany. My parents kept in touch with their parents for as long as they could, but eventually my father's mother went to a concentration camp, and my mother's parents went to an old age home in Frankfurt. When we left Germany, we took all our belongings but had to leave family members behind.

I liked being in Philadelphia very much. I especially liked walking to City Hall to look at all the tall buildings. When I first started school in Philadelphia, I wore shorts because kids in Germany wore shorts, but here all the kids wore long pants. To fit in, I bought long pants, too. The classes there were very good. I didn't speak very much English, so the teacher got me books to read so that I could practice my English. My father worked in a men's clothing factory and my mother did photographic retouching. I had a little wagon, and I went to grocery stores and helped carry packages home for people. I earned a little money that way.

In 1943 I joined the Army, and around 1944 I became a citizen. I had basic training in field artillery, but because my knees were bad, I couldn't take long hikes. I was transferred to the military police. I became an interpreter for Italian prisoners. That was a problem because I couldn't speak any Italian. I also pretended not to understand any German. My secret was revealed when I couldn't keep from laughing when the Germans were telling jokes. I became a German interpreter and I gave lectures to the German prisoners about the atrocities in Germany. I still have a copy of the book the US Army prepared to teach the German prisoners. Even with the pictures, the prisoners didn't want to believe it. I also didn't want to believe it, but I had families who experienced those atrocities, and to forget them would be a crime.

Gertrude Alexander

By Shira Aitchison

Every time I sit down to hear my Grandma Gertrude's story, I find myself enthralled. It is truly amazing to hear about her life which seems worlds away. As I sit with her and listen to her journey on the Kindertransport, it is almost surreal to imagine that she was once my age. As I diligently prepare for my SATs and begin to think about college, I can't help but feel guilty. At an age when I get to complain about school work, my grandmother was leaving her country, her language, and her family to begin a new life. I realize now that it is only after much hardship and travel that my Grandmother can sit with me today and tell me her story. I am very lucky to have her and I am honored to share her inspiring story.

I was born in Vienna, Austria in 1924. I had a very good life until I was 14 years old I attended a really good private school where girls were taught all the subjects usually reserved for boys at that time, such as physics, geometry, Latin, and even Greek. My favorite memories are the holidays, which were always celebrated at the home of my grandmother and Seders with wonderful food and a festive table that accommodated the whole family of more than a dozen people. My uncle conducted the Seder, but everybody participated by singing along. My cousin Fritz (Fred) the youngest by about six months asked the four questions. Then, there was Chanukah, and everybody assembled at grandmother's place. There were only three children in our family and lots of adults, so we received an incredible number of wonderful presents. We did not have a car very few people in Vienna did at that time, so we filled up a cab with all my presents on our way home. I had a couple of very good girlfriends, Eva and Beatrice, but we all wound up in completely different places during the war. Although I tried to find them after the war, I was not able to do so. All I know is that they too escaped.

When the Nazis occupied Vienna, where they were welcomed with open arms, my father, your great grandfather Karl, was picked up by the gestapo on the infamous 10th of November 1938 and taken to the concentration camp Dachau. Fortunately, he had a number of clients as he was a lawyer in Switzerland and France who asked their embassies in Vienna to locate him. In response to their questions, he was released, but had to leave the country immediately, leaving all our belongings behind. In the meantime, my uncle, who was helping kids to escape from Vienna via the "Kindertransport," arranged for my cousin Fred and I to join the children who were sent to England. My cousin Susan, who was older, had already left for England with her mother to be domestic help, which was the only way for her to get out.

The Kindertransport turned out to be very fortunate for me because I was sent to London, where a church group had arranged to put up about ten Jewish girls from Austria

and Germany in a group home which was a private home with a house mother and a cook. We were allowed to go to a school of our choice and to attend the neighborhood synagogue. The people who arranged all this remained anonymous. They had decided that these girls should not have to thank anyone for their help; it was bad enough that they were separated from their parents and in a strange country. The cook was Jewish, and I had the chutzpah to insist that they get two whole sets of separate dishes for Passover.

I had decided that I would continue to keep Kosher, although I did not believe in Kashrut, because I thought it was not fair to my parents to make that decision in their absence.

Soon, the Second World War broke out and later the bombing of England started. The schools all evacuated their students to the country, and suddenly we were all in the same boat. We were all separated from our parents.

As the war progressed, I heard that my parents had left Europe and had gone to Shanghai, China, one of the few places in the world that accepted refugees. I tried to join them, but of course, I had no money and no connections. I applied to the Jewish agency for help, but passages on ships to the Orient were few and far between. All the parents of children who had been sent to England for education by people who lived in the British colonies were trying to get their children out of England as were Japanese and Korean parents whose kids were studying in England (Japan was not yet at war then). One day, I was contacted by the Jewish Agency and told that if I could get to Liverpool by the next day, I could get a space on a Japanese boat bound for Shanghai because someone had cancelled his passage. I didn't have much to pack anyway, and somehow I made it from Maidenhead, which was where my school had been evacuated to, to London, and from there by train to Liverpool. I had of course not gotten any sleep and when I boarded the ship, I was exhausted.

My berth was below the waterline, and I could hear the engines which told me that we were on our way and I immediately fell asleep. The next thing I heard were air raid sirens. I thought, "how come? I thought we were at sea?" The other people in my cabin told me that we were still in Liverpool Harbor and that I had slept through the worst air raid ever and what I was hearing was the all clear signal. A number of ships around us were in flames. I had slept through all of it! A pilot brought us through the Irish Sea, which was full of mines, to Dublin and then to Belfast. Finally, we were on our way. Our trip took us to Lisbon, Portugal; Capetown, New London and Durban South Africa; Bombay, India; Colombo, Sri Lanka; Singapore, Hong Kong; nd finally Shanghai. I saw all these places from the ship, but was only allowed ashore in Lisbon. The trip took exactly 3 months.

My parents who knew I was on the way, but not which ship I was on, had met every ship from England and finally they were able to greet me. The reunion was wonderful! Our life in Shanghai was a lot better than that of some of the 20,000 plus refugees because my father was employed as a judge at a reconciliation court that took care of disputes between the refugees who wanted to settle their differences without having to go to Chinese court.

I had taken fashion art classes in London and got a job at a French salon where my custom designs were executed by Chinese seamstresses for foreign customers who were French, British, American, etc. and sold at very high prices. The owner was the wife of the French Consul General.

Soon after I arrived in China, the war started in the Far East and the Japanese occupied what had been the international part of the city. After a while, all foreigners were interned and the Jewish refugees were forced to live in a designated area which was a slum surrounded by barbed wire. Life was pretty difficult there because we still had to house and feed ourselves as best as we could with some help from foreign Jewish organizations. Later the American Air Force started to bomb this area because the Japanese had located factories there that produced ammunitions. They thought that they would be safe in an area full of Europeans. We got our news from a shortwave radio and realized that the war was not going too well for the Germans or the Japanese, so we hoped to be freed soon.

I met Grandpa Ted while we lived in this ghetto area and we planned to be married as soon as the war was over. Though things were pretty grim, we never doubted that we would survive. When the war came to an end, Grandpa Ted was reinstated in his job at one of the biggest international British firms, and in less than a year after the war was over, we got married. Life was very good again. We lived in a small but beautiful apartment in an elegant apartment house that belonged to his company (they owned a number of apartment houses, several big hotels, as well as the bus company, the power company etc. etc.). However, it became apparent that the Chinese Communists would soon occupy Shanghai and we made use of an affidavit that allowed us to come to the U.S.

On Yom Kippur of 1947, we arrived in San Francisco and decided that we would make our home in the Bay Area. From the beginning, we made our own way, never relying on any help from the government, as there was none, or from various Jewish organizations which wanted to help only those people who would agree to relocate to other states and cities. We both got jobs. I, at a big department store and grandpa at a big insurance company. We rented a room in a rooming house in Berkeley. Apartments were impossible to come by since the soldiers who came back to the United States from the war also liked the Bay Area and occupied every available rental. However, we kept looking and found a nice apartment in North Berkeley, in a four-plex. It became our home for a number of years. From there, we moved to the Berkeley Hills. I changed jobs. First, I became an assistant buyer and then, after another change, a buyer for a group of fashion stores in the East Bay. After a number of years I changed to yet another firm, where I became the general merchandise manager. Grandpa Ted worked for them for a while too, then he became a representative of various fashion firms, but on weekends he was able to do what he really liked and was qualified for. He worked as a part time Rabbi. He would have taken a full time position as a Rabbi but he insisted on staying in one place. As a Rabbi, he would have had to move every time his contract was not renewed. He thought that we had had to move too much already in our lives. When we expected a baby, your mom, we moved to Oakland so that I could be close to my workplace. Though I would continue to work, I could come home at lunchtime or

at any time during the day to make sure that our baby, Leslie, would be happy and taken good care of by the nanny. Years went by and we moved to Walnut Creek, bought a house, then moved to Danville and bought a bigger house that we still live in and that we love very much. Grandpa took a full time position as a Rabbi in San Francisco, where he has been for the past 35 years. I bought my own store in Alameda and finally retired, only to go back to work as C.F.O of a friend's business in San Rafael, where I stayed for seven years.

Now, I am really retired, but I volunteer at our Congregation's sisterhood as a treasurer and as a treasurer and financial secretary of the Northern California chapter of Women's League for Conservative Judaism, take watercolor workshops (I have even sold some of my paintings) and enjoy my most important job, that of being Grandma Gertrude to my beloved granddaughters Shira and Aliza.

Ida Fishman

By Daphna Davidovits and Veronica Ferdman

In 1941, when Ida Fishman was 15 years old the war began in Russia. She was born in Odessa, which is a beautiful city on the Black Sea. Her father worked as a very prominent furniture maker in the town and she had a younger and an older sister.

When the Germans started to attack Odessa they would throw firebombs down on buildings. Ida and her friends were very patriotic. They felt it was their duty to protect the buildings, so they would go up onto the roofs of these building and throw the burning bombs down to the street with their bare hands. By some miracle they did not get hurt.

When the Germans invaded, all the men were required to go and fight, but Ida's father was too old and had a problem with his eyes so he was taken to be a nurse. The other residents of Odessa had to go dig trenches and build wall-like structures, made out of wood and metal, to stop the German tanks from invading. So, Ida went to do this. While digging trenches she met a young man whom she became friends with. One night he woke her up in the middle of the night to tell her that almost everyone else had left because the Germans had surrounded the area. He took her to a road that military trucks traveled on and one of them stopped and took her with them to Odessa, leaving the young man behind. When Ida got home everyone began to cry because they thought that she had died. Ida saw the young man who helped her one other time when getting off of a trolley car. He was going off to the army, and that was the last time she ever saw him.

Ida's family got a letter from her father so she and her mother decided to go to where he was. While traveling there the Germans started shooting behind them, but Ida and her mother were able to make it to where her father was safely. When Ida saw her father she could barely recognize him; his hair had become gray and he looked weary. Her father traveled back to Odessa with Ida and her mother.

In Odessa, Ida's father bought them boat tickets, because Germans surrounded Odessa and the only way out of the city was by boat. So Ida, her mother, her little sister, and her two grandmothers, went on the boat while her father went back to the front.

On the boat they arrived at Novorossiysk, and from there they took a one-month train ride on a cattle car to Siberia. The train would stop periodically and Ida would get off to go and buy food for her family. One time she went to get food and the train left without her and nearly 100 other people. The manager of the train station told them that they could board the next train that came by that would be headed to the same place as their previous train. Ida waited for nearly 10 hours before the train finally came. When Ida arrived at where her train was it was very dark and everyone was shouting the names of the people

who had been on the train. Ida heard her mom calling "Idachka, Idachka Fishman!" She followed the sound of her voice and was reunited with her family.

One time Ida was underneath the train because she had been trying to take a short cut to the other side of the tracks when the train started moving, so she had to run from underneath the train. Ida believes that G-D put his hand on her back and saved her.

When Ida's family got to Siberia they were given a small hut to stay in. It was very cold and the snow would get through into their room. They were given grain and Ida had to help her grandmother make the bread, by crushing the grain into flour.

While Ida and her family were in Siberia, she began wondering what happened to her father. She had a cousin who lived in Caucasus, and her family sent a letter to her cousin. When all the troops were taken to Novorossiysk her father was with them. He began wondering what happened to his family, and he began searching for them. However he believed that they went to Uzbekistan and went in search of them there. He also sent a letter to his niece, Ida's cousin, and in her response she gave him Ida and her family's address. Ida's mother believed in the fortunes she read in cards. In the cards, her mother had seen that her father was alive and that they would find him soon. Soon after that they received a letter from him telling them where he was and that he was all right. Ida and her family decided to go meet her father as soon as possible.

Going to meet her father was very hard. Ida and her mother were running from one office to another trying to get tickets. After about 5 or 6 hours of running they finally received the tickets and began boarding the train. The only problem was that they forgot about Ida's little sister and grandmother who had been waiting for them. By some miracle, as Ida and her mother were boarding the train they showed up.

They traveled for two weeks on the train starving. But finally they got there. In Uzbekistan everything was very green, the sky was blue and there were streams running through the city because it was so hot there. Ida's father was staying in a small room in a flat. Ida's mother and father shared the bed and Ida and her sister slept on the floor. They were very happy there because it was very warm.

Soon after they were settled in, Ida began working in a factory that made carbon paper. She had to put the carbon on the paper. She worked as fast as she could to make as much money as possible. Ida went to college in September of 1942. She was a very good mathematician and very good at literature and so she was able to complete 3 years in one. Ida said that she always was "ahead of the train."

In August, 1943, Ida Fishman was sent to work on a farm. However, her clothes were stolen. After 2 or 3 days she spoke to the head of the group and explained to him her situation and he allowed her to go home. She arrived home on August 12, 1943. This was a very happy day for her because on this day Odessa was liberated.

Mrs. Fishman also told us about her sister's story during the Holocaust. Her sister was married to a soldier and had a son. When the war started her sister's husband was called to fight. The government decided to bring all the families of the soldiers to stay with their husbands. However, the town was surrounded by the Germans so the families were taken to another city. The Germans moved quickly and soon surrounded this city as well. They ordered all the Jews and commanders to go to a certain place and eventually they were killed. Ida's sister however, was told by another woman not to go because they would kill her. Ida's sister listened to them and they hid her in a hole in the ground in the woods and a family took care of her son. Ida's sister was so close to the Germans that she could hear them talking. Unfortunately the family was unable to bring her food and she had to eat jelly infested with insects. Thankfully she survived.

Ida Fishman taught us that it is important to "carry on the torch." It is important that we know what happened and that we remember it.

Inge Weinberg Rudman

By Julie Kiss

Although not everyone in the cradle of humanity is aware, we each have a story to tell. Those who have the opportunity, search for understanding and compassion from others. I am fortunate to learn a story, one that truly affected my heart. Hearing Inge's story made me understand that I take my life for granted, that I don't value my relationships enough, and perhaps value my belongings too much.

Inge was born in 1927 and grew up in Cologne, Germany with her mother, father and younger sister, Ursel. Her father, Alphonse Weinberg, was born in New York City to Polish émigré parents, in 1890. In Germany he owned a shoe factory. Her mother, Hedwig Knopfmacher Weinberg (known as Hede to her friends), was born in Dueren, Germany but became stateless in 1937 when she applied for an American visa. This meant she had no passport, although the American Consulate gave her a letter declaring that she was the guardian of two American children. Inge, therefore, was raised as a German citizen even though she was an American.

Inge's family considered themselves liberal Jews. They did not keep a kosher home, but they attended synagogue on all Jewish holidays and sometimes on Shabbat. They were Zionists, and most of Inge's mother's family emigrated to Israel in 1933. Uncle Erich Knopfmacher lived on a moshav near Tel Aviv where he raised chickens, Uncle Heinz Knopfmacher died while fighting with the Haganah years before the establishment of the state, and Aunt Erna Knopfmacher Mador (now 94 years old) still lives in the Achusa section of Haifa.

For first grade Inge attended a German public school. The next year, however, the Germans did not allow Jewish children to study in public school so she had to transfer to an Orthodox Jewish school. Going to the Jewish school was hard because she couldn't read Hebrew and didn't know most of the prayers. On the morning after Kristallnacht, Inge saw her school, synagogue, schoolbooks and prayerbooks burn while the firemen stood by and watched.

In Inge's German community Jews and non-Jews were totally separate and had no relationship whatsoever. Once the Nazis came to power, Jewish children were scared to get caught by the Hitler Youth, who referred to them as pigs and called them "dirty Jews." The Hitler Youth could do anything to Jewish children and get away with it. The adults were frightened by the Gestapo, who rode around Cologne in sidecars with sirens. There were signs on store doors and windows saying, "We don't sell to Jews," or "Jews may not enter here." Inge's parents did not let her play outside alone.

In 1937, dairy products were rationed for Jews, but a very kind milkman brought them to her home twice a week anyway. He even gave Inge's mother more milk than her allotment. Somehow, the milkman's son found out and reported him to the leader of his Hitler Youth group. The milkman was soon arrested and deported.

"It was hard living under the Nazis," Inge recalls. "Everyone was depressed. It was a dark, gray period." Inge's mother did what she could to brighten her children's lives. She made celebrations of every occasion, from good grades in school to birthdays, allowing the person who was being celebrated to choose the menu for dinner. These were occasions were filled with song. Sometimes small, funny gifts appeared as a surprise at the dinner table, which lightened the atmosphere. Inge's parents tried to keep life as normal as possible.

Two days after Kristallnacht, on November 11, 1938, Alphonse and Hede took Inge and her sister to the office of the American Consulate overlooking the Rhine River. The office was closed since it was Armistice Day in the U.S., but Alphonse needed to update his passport to prove that he was not German, so he threw little pebbles at the window to rouse the consul. The consul opened the door for the family, and after a short discussion typed two passports, one for Alphonse and one for the two sisters. "It was a crisp, sunny day and we walked about a mile from the river front into the city," Inge remembered. "The first stop was at a little store where [Alphonse] bought four American flag pins. As he pinned one on each of us and himself he made us promise never to leave the house without it. Then we went on to his parents' house for lunch and a prayer of thanksgiving."

Inge's father left Germany for New York in February 1939 in order to find a job and set up an apartment for his wife and daughters. Despite his business experience in Germany, he could only find a job sweeping factory floors in the United States. Being without a father and husband for the next six months was difficult for Hede and the two girls. Hede had to make decisions in a "man's world," which was not easy in 1939. She had to negotiate with the German government in order to get enough money for food and living expenses since her husband's bank account had been confiscated. Inge worried that she would never see her father again. She, her mother and sister wrote letters to him daily and sent photographs as often as possible. He, in turn, was having a difficult time because he had so little money.

On September 1, 1939, the day Germany invaded Poland, Inge, Hede and Ursel finally left Cologne. They went to Zurich, Switzerland where they waited three weeks for Hede's visa. Then they traveled to Bordeaux, France to wait for the SS Washington that would take them to the United States. They waited two to three weeks for the ship, and then spent three to four days aboard ship before it left the port. The day the ship set sail, there was a rainbow in the sky. Inge's mother saw the rainbow and viewed it as a sign that the family would arrive safely in New York.

On October 12, 1939 Inge arrived in New York and moved into her father's apartment.

Her father had exactly $46 with which to feed a family of four. Fortunately, a cousin lent him some money, but this embarrassed him greatly. For entertainment the family took long walks, but never stopped for ice cream because they could not afford it. They did not go to the movies for the same reason. Even though Inge and her sister knew it was hard for their parents they begged for things anyway. Hanukkah and birthday presents were limited to necessities, such as a skirt for fifty cents. Hede and Alphonse felt terrible because they had to deny their daughters so much.

One week after arriving in New York, Inge started school where she was mercilessly teased for being a foreigner. During one grade-wide assembly, a teacher yelled at Inge for telling a fellow student what page the song was on. The teacher made her sit in the back of the room, and humiliated her because she didn't speak English well. Inge got her "revenge" when she graduated from junior high school with the English medal! Inge's parents earned a living by making small leather goods in their apartment. Inge and her sister worked with them everyday after school and did their homework in the evening.

After graduating from high school, Inge attended Hunter College and received a graduate degree in physical therapy from Columbia Medical School. In 1955 she married Dr. Daniel Rudman in New York City. There they had two children, Richard, who is now a lawyer in Boston, and Nancy Young who is an electrical engineer in California. The family moved to Atlanta, GA in 1967 where Inge studied gerontology at Georgia State University and was instrumental in developing the Home for Jewish Seniors under the auspices of the National Council of Jewish Women.

As empty nesters Inge and Daniel moved first to Chicago in 1983 and then to Milwaukee in 1988 where they worked together doing research for the National Institute of Health (N.I.H.). Daniel died in 1994 and Inge continued their research until the grant money ran out. She retired in 1999 at the age of 72, and after several years of entreaties by her daughter, she moved to San Jose, CA in 2003.

Before September 11, 2001 Inge couldn't talk about her story, even with her family. Somehow, that horrible day opened the door for her. It made her think of the American flag pins her father bought so many years ago in Germany, and reminded her of everything she loves about the United States. Although Inge does not think about Germany very often anymore, she feels that almost everything she does results from her childhood experience, from the way she and her husband raised their children, to their family values and their emphasis on education. Today she is active in Jewish causes, gives generously to the hungry and homeless and is concerned about civil rights. Inge's daughter, Nancy, is active in the Second Generation Group. I feel absolutely honored and thankful to have been able to hear Inge's remarkable story. Somewhere in the world, someone else is looking to tell their story, but they need your help to be discovered.

Ivan Streger

By Barry Rosekind

Sixty one year old Ivan Streger was born during the War in 1943 in Debrecen, Hungary. His parents were Eva and Joseph Streiger.

Ivan's parents were well off. His father was twenty years old, and his mother sixteen when they married. They were married in 1941 or 1942, and right away Ivan's father was taken away to a camp. Ivan does not to this day know where the camp was. He continued living in town with his mother.

His grandfather was somewhat religious and owned businesses. He owned ice cream parlors, and a furniture store, as well as other businesses in Debrecen, which was the second largest town in Hungary. He was well known in the community. They went to synagogue. They were wealthy, and hired a "shabbos goy" to handle the lights, etc. None of the Hungarian Jews were really secular.

During the War, a gentile family hid five mothers and their children, including Ivan and his mother. They were hidden in a basement behind this family's house for two years and later one of their sons married Ivan's aunt.

Since Ivan was blue eyed and blond, he could go out and not be hidden now and then. The gentile family would take him out. And he was even given candy by Germans. When a siren would sound, and bombing occurred, they would go into a little room to hide. When it was dark, they could come out for fresh air.

Ivan's father survived the camp he was taken to by saying he was a cook. The Nazis questioned all the yeshiva students, asking them whether they had a trade and knowing they did not since they were students. Ivan's father and another boy, however, said they could cook. And this is how they survived.

Eventually, Ivan's grandparents were taken by train to Auschwitz. But their train never made it to Auschwitz. By the end of 1944, the Germans were in cahoots with the Hungarians. They became allies and together they swept the Jews from Hungary.

In 1947, Ivan's family escaped to Israel. They had to escape from Hungarian Communists, through Austria by train through Italy, and on a boat from Naples filled with animals and Moroccan and Polish Jews. They went through Cyprus and into Haifa by night; they became Israelis.

Once in Israel, they were sent to a Hagganah concentration camp where they lived in

barracks. The Hagganah asked Ivan's father if he was a partisan. He was still a young man, and they asked him to join the army. Even cooks were needed for the army but they soon told him they hoped he could shoot better than he could cook, and they gave him a gun after two weeks. He was not a great cook as he only knew how to cook with hot water, pepper, salt, potato peels, kasha, and barley.

Ivan's other grandfather had already come to Israel in 1933 with the Rothschild family. This grandfather wrote to his grandmother in Hungary how beautiful it was in Israel, with opportunities, lots of sand, and only a few houses in Tel Aviv at that time. He told her it was like America. She told him to come home, saying, "I am in America and it's in Debrecen." He bought land in Tel Aviv, and left it to his brother. He had cows on his land. When Ivan arrived in Israel, they took a bus to visit this grandfather in Tel Aviv.

When the fighting near Haifa ended, his own father was given a four level house, where two families lived in two rooms. It was a big improvement and they lived there a long time.

Ivan visited Debrecen a few years ago and many families still remembered his family.

Ivan is a kind man who makes everybody smile. Even though he experienced terrible times, he is still a kind and welcoming man. His story is another amazing tale, and should teach us that even after a horrific event like the Holocaust, an amount of good still exists.

Joan Stone

By Matthew Diamond

Joan Stone, originally named Hertha Frank, was born September 11, 1925. The only child in her family, Joan lived in Augsburg, Germany, a city about an hour away from Munich. Joan grew up in her grandparents' house in an apartment situated above her grandparents' clothing store. Her parents divorced and her father left the family when she was only three years old. Her grandfather died when she was eight, so for the larger part of her life in Germany, Joan was raised by her mother, uncle, and grandmother.

Augsburg, which had a population of about 200,000 at the time, was founded soon after the Common Era, and for centuries, it was a very good city for Jewish people to live, work, and worship in peace. Records from the second half of the 13th century show a well-organized Jewish community and mention a Judenhaus, a Jewish house, a synagogue, cemetery, and a ritual bathhouse. There was a large Reform synagogue and a well populated Sunday school. Jews and gentiles got along well, and there were no social problems. Unfortunately, that situation changed forever during the early 1930's.

Joan was in the third grade of an all girls elementary school when Hitler first came to power. The anti-Semitism was not widespread at first, but it slowly grew over time. Joan distinctly remembers her family having to hide the newspaper from her so that she would not see the offensive material written in it. When she attended a private high school the Jewish girls were forced to go upstairs and watch while the rest of the students celebrated Hitler's birthday in the garden below. Joan remembers a gentile girlfriend, who she had known for many years, refusing to talk to her after Hitler came to power. Nazis in their SS uniforms blocked the entrances to the town's synagogue. They also painted signs stating that her grandparents were Jewish on the windows of their clothing store and discouraged customers from buying clothes there.

In 1934, events began to escalate when the Nazis took one of Joan's male teachers from the synagogue's Sunday school to a concentration camp. In 1935, when the Nuremberg Laws were enacted, Joan's housekeeper had to be let go because her uncle, a single Jewish male, was living there, and the laws clearly stated that a single Jewish male could not live in the same house as a gentile female . She also remembers seeing signs "Dogs and Jews not admitted" at the town swimming pool, skating rink, restaurants and theaters.

Because of censorship her relatives in the United States kept writing to her family to "take the child out of Germany." Joan's family saw all of the signs very clearly: terrible things were on the horizon and they knew that they had to leave Germany. Joan and her mother received their visas from their aunt and uncle in the spring of 1937 and were able to leave Germany by ship on June 30, 1937. They arrived in New York eight days later

on July 8th. Joan's uncle also managed to get a visa to emigrate to South Africa. Joan's grandmother was able to leave in December 1939 after the war had already started in Europe, and went to South Africa as well. Her father left Germany for France in September 1934. He lived in Paris until he was deported to Camp Gurs in France and from there to Auschwitz. The International Red Cross declared that he did not survive the Holocaust. Looking back on the experience, Joan marvels at the fact that the majority of her family escaped Germany.

Once in America, Joan's life changed dramatically. Because she and her mother had only been able to extract four dollars each from Germany, Joan's mother had to get a job as a housekeeper that paid $15 a week. Joan went to a coed grade school for the first time and had to go back a grade because she did not know English. It was at this point in time that she changed her name to Joan because she was annoyed when the people from New York pronounced her name Hertha as "Hoi-tha." She met her husband, Henry Stone, also a Holocaust survivor, in December 1942. Henry's cousin, with whom Joan coincidentally had attended kindergarten in Germany, introduced them. Henry had narrowly escaped being deported to a concentration camp on Kristallnacht (the night of broken glass) November 9, 1938 because he was in a hospital in Munich having his appendix removed. Joan and Henry were married on September 8, 1948.

Joan and Henry have four children and five grandchildren. She still feels extremely lucky to have escaped the worst of the Holocaust. She later found out that the Nazis destroyed the interior of her old synagogue on Kristallnacht, and the last remaining Jews in Augsburg were deported on April 3, 1942. The synagogue was restored and rededicated in 1985 to its original splendor. Joan loves the United States and how everyone has the right to voice their political views. She has proudly voted in every election since becoming a citizen in 1947 when Harry Truman was elected president, and she considers voting to be a privilege and a duty.

As both the interviewer and the writer of this paper, I got a great deal out of this experience. When I first met Joan, there was no way for me to tell how remarkable she was, but as soon as she started talking, I was amazed at how much she knew, how much she had been through, and how much she was willing to share. I was perplexed that she was able to talk about all the terrible things that the Nazis did without a hint of hatred in her voice, and remember feeling relieved when I heard how the majority of her family managed to escape unscathed. It was truly an honor for me to meet Joan and to help her share her powerful story. My only regret is that I was the only person to actually hear her story while everyone else will have to learn it through my interpretation.

Joseph Lev

By Alex Herbach

I climb the two flights of stairs of the large apartment complex where my survivor lives. I knock on the door. A young woman answers it and invites me in. I enter the apartment and scan the contents of it as I walk into the living room. There are pictures of grandchildren arranged on a dresser. Underneath it, several bottles of unopened seltzer lie against a wall. I turn the corner and sitting in a chair, his hands placed neatly in his lap, is Joseph Lev, a man who survived the horrors of the Holocaust, and whose story I was trying to tell. He speaks very little English, having to speak to me through his Romanian caretaker who had answered the door. He would communicate as best he could without the help of his interpreter, offering me the seat next to his with a wave of his hand, and gesturing a plate of brownies in my direction. I accepted both, and sat down. His aide took a seat on the couch next to him, and before I could open my mouth, Joseph started talking.

He began by recounting his early memories of life in Bucharest. "I am an only child so it was just me and my parents," he explained. "My mother would stay at home while my father worked at a local textile plant. On Saturday nights, I would go to my grandparents' house for Shabbat dinners. There were six aunts and uncles in my family so it was a big gathering for these dinners."

His eyes would widen as he described these memories. He was talking so fast, his aide and I could barely keep up. I tried redirecting the conversation and asked him about the anti-Semitism in Bucharest before the war. His eyes dimmed slightly as I asked this, but he wasn't flustered. He switched gears and started talking, going even faster than before. There was no questioning his determination. He wanted his story told.

"There was anti-Semitism in Romania, but it became more frequent in 1936 when the Iron Guard [the militant wing of the Romanian government] took control of the country. They were working directly with the Nazis at this point and took over the government after King Carol had to flee the country because he was living with a Jewish woman. The Germans installed Antonescu as the leader of the government, but the Iron Guard had all of the power. In 1940, they started to murder the Jews. By January 1941, they were out of control, killing Jews and Romanians freely. At this point, the Germans were ready to take over the country themselves, so they ordered Antonescu to get rid of the Iron Guard. The Nazis assumed control and started to ship the Jews out of the country into Transnistria. Many died on the way, as the trains were designed to weed out the weak. The rest were worked to death. My uncle and his family were taken on one of these trains. During a stop, the child became thirsty and started to run towards a well. They shot the child in the back. The parents ran after their child and they too were shot."

His words flowed quickly from his mouth. There was no pain or hesitation in his eyes. In fact, at times, he would actually smile as he remembered a detail of his life that somehow elicited a smile instead of pain. I just listened, dumbfounded by his will and his sense of purpose. But as he started to speak about his personal experiences, and all of the horrors he had to survive, I started to understand why he wanted to have his story written down.

"Between 1942 and 1944, I was working at the labor camps [on the outskirts of the city]. We were set up in groups of 100, and every group was watched by 10 military leaders and one lieutenant in charge. The lieutenant was important. Sometimes you could get one that wouldn't beat you so often. That made the work a little easier. We were in charge of clearing the dead bodies from the battlefield after the fighting was over. We had to wear the yellow star on our arms and our chest while we cleaned. We would also have to locate all the bombs and mines that hadn't exploded. We would have to dig in the dirt with our hands, hoping we wouldn't trip a bomb. We had to do the most dangerous work for the army and we couldn't complain. We were always tired and weak because we could only get two hours of sleep a night due to the bombing raids, and there was very little food. We lived in constant fear. Always we were scared."

My whole body was numb as I listened to his story. My hands were numb from trying to write it down, but the rest of my body was numb from the story itself. I couldn't imagine what it must have been like for him during those two years of torture, the years of cold, hunger, pain, weakness, and death. How strong his will to survive was to never give up on a life that must have been so hard to live! I wondered if he ever had problems keeping his faith during those two years. I asked him if he kept up with his Jewish practices. His answer was short and powerful.

"We had no cultural base in the camps. We were given no time to be Jewish."

His parents meanwhile were still living in Bucharest. All Jews in the city were required to work in the labor camps, but they were able to pay a worker to do their work for them, so they could continue to live in the city. But in 1944, the Germans made inspections of the camps to make sure that everyone was working. The Levs were notified ahead of time by the worker, and they were forced to go into hiding, staying with different relatives for two weeks. Fortunately for the family, the war in Eastern Europe was ending. Joseph's camp was surrounded by the Romanian Army and liberated. But the Germans continued to bomb the camp and the surrounding city. Joseph stayed with some relatives for the remainder of the bombing, and he was finally reunited with his family three days later. "After [we were reunited]," said Joseph, "We felt like we no longer had to fear being Jews. We felt safe, free, liberated, and no longer felt fear."

These feelings would not last long for Joseph and his family. Though they were free from Nazi persecution, the Levs were not free from the persecution of Communism. With the liberation of the Russian Army, Romania became a Russian satellite. Within two years,

all of Joseph's newfound freedoms were gone, victims of the Communist regime. Joseph found work as a director of operations at an import/export company in Bucharest. He worked hard and encouraged his children to escape the Iron Curtain. After watching his family escape to freedom, he decided it was his turn to leave as well. In 1987, he was expedited to Italy by the Austrian government after they found out he worked in the German labor camps. He spent three months living near Rome before he completed his journey, landing in New York. Stepping off the boat, breathing in the sea air, he knew. He was finally free.

Judy Denes

By Ilana Nankin

Judy Denes was born on December 1, 1938 in Warsaw, Poland. Soon after she was born, the Nazis took over her home and changed her family's way of life. As a young, innocent child, Judy was accustomed to the Warsaw Ghetto lifestyle because she knew nothing else. She lived with her mother, Eva Akerstein, father, Adam, and her older brother, Carl. Her parents gave her the birth name of Shaina Midnica, which was eventually changed when she moved out of Poland. Because she was born into the brutality of the Holocaust, many of her memories are vague and unclear.

As a child, Judy sparkled with energy and had a different perspective on life in the ghetto than most did. Although the overall outlook and attitude of those who were trapped and tortured there were very negative, she maintained her innocence and zest for life. She remembers constantly playing around and singing as a child. At times, her gleeful spirit put her family at risk and her mother punished her for the noise. Although the Nazis attempted to humiliate the Jewish people by forcing them to wear a yellow Jewish star with an identification number, Judy pranced around and played with the star, as if it was her most prized possession.

When she was just three years old, her father who was in charge of garbage removal, helped some Jews escape the ghetto by smuggling them out in the refuse. Judy, her mother and brother slipped out of the ghetto this way too. Adam Midnica was caught by the Nazis and killed. To this day Judy only vaguely remembers her father because she was so young when he left her life. Judy, Carl and their mother went to the home of her father's friend, Mr.Paluschik, who was the head of Polish police. He hid them in the bathroom of his home for three years. Judy could only come out at night, and found it very difficult to adjust to the confined environment. Although the home was like torture for her, she dearly loved Mr. Paluschik, and built a strong bond with him. After three years, when Poland was freed by the Russians, Judy, her mother, and Carl left the house and ran to the open fields. They could hardly walk and were very malnourished. Judy and her brother had not eaten for a long time and were extremely sick, so they were hospitalized for about one year, while their mother worked in a kitchen.

When Judy left the Polish police officer's house, she knew nothing of the outside world. She had not been outside since she was three years old and did not understand the way people lived. One time, she thought she was going to be killed when someone took her picture because she assumed that a camera was a deadly weapon. Her 13-year old brother was given the opportunity to leave Poland and immigrate to Israel. It was difficult for Judy to part from another family member. They did not reunite for eight years, when they met

in the United States.

At the age of seven, her mother was the only person left in her life to comfort and support her. Judy often got frustrated with her mother because her mother talked too much of the Holocaust. In 1945, they went to a Displaced Persons' camp, where they met Joe Akerstien, a man who would soon become a new member of the family. Joe and her mother fell in love and Joe became a father-like figure to Judy for the rest of his life.

After they escaped from communist Poland to Germany, Judy and her mother moved to America. Judy stopped speaking Polish right away because she wanted to forget her childhood life in Warsaw and was embarrassed about her past. She was very reluctant to speak about her wartime experiences and tried to put them behind her. She never felt any desire to return to Poland because she felt it would be as if she were stepping in a puddle of blood.

In the United States Judy grew up in the lower east side of Manhattan, where she lived with her mother and stepfather. When she was a teenager, she attended Seward Park High School and eventually went to City College in uptown New York for a year, before she married a Jewish, American-born man, Harvey Logvin. They were married for 25 years and lived in San Jose, California. Judy and Harvey had three sons, who are all currently unmarried. After many years, the couple divorced and she then met George Denes, who was also a Holocaust survivor. Their common experience helped them build a strong connection with one another and they were soon married. Together they have created a loving home with their children.

The Holocaust was a damaging time. Judy believes there are two types of survivors: those who are very hurt and go on, and others who stay hurt. As a child, Judy saw the Holocaust through her mother's eyes. Her mother saw herself as a victim, which was very uncomfortable for Judy. Instead, Judy tries to live life day-to-day, and not let hurt from the past take over.

Looking back on her experiences, Judy believes that her undying spirit helped her get through her childhood because she had a constant desire to be happy. Even today, she bursts out in song and sings and dances, and simply loves life. She and her husband love to travel and spend time together. Her connection to her past and her desire to move on and look into the future truly impact the way she lives.

Judy has a very unique outlook on life that clearly shines through her energetic and exciting personality. After attending the March of the Living last year, and witnessing the horror in the concentration camps and Warsaw Ghetto in Poland, I was so moved by the way that Judy, although in a horrible situation, could still keep high hopes and stay strong. Judy's story was an inspiration to me and I hope to continue to share her valuable lessons and story with others.

Jussi (Gyula/Gyuszi) Rajna

By Emily Isaacs

Ringing the doorbell, I was surprised to see such a tall, vigorous man greet me at the door. Maybe it was just because I was expecting someone much older, much more aged. As I entered into his living room, I noticed the many photographs of his family around his house and realized the true triumph of those persecuted in the Holocaust: the Master Plan had been crushed and the Jewish nation lived on by way of the survivors' children and grandchildren. Surely I could tell that Jussi Rajna was one of these great survivors before even speaking with him…

A photograph from the 1940's is on the coffee table it is of a grandmother, surrounded by her children and grandchildren. Could they have known what was to come? I looked into the picture further. Next to the grandmother is a little boy around the age of seven. While everyone else is looking into the camera, this boy's mind wanders far off into the distance. His thoughts are beyond the film, and he knows nothing of what is to come. There stands the little Jussi, unaware of what time will bring.

Jussi Rajna was born in Budapest, Hungary in 1935. The second of two children, he and his sister Jutka lived with their parents Laszlo and Margit in an apartment in the middle of the city. Laszlo was a baker and would later inspire his son to apprentice as and take the occupation of a baker. As a child, Jussi had a very carefree and easy lifestyle. He went to a private kindergarten and enjoyed swimming in the natural hot water springs nearby. In 1943, however, his class was divided by religion. About 20 percent of Jussi's classmates, all of whom were boys, were Jewish. Many of the Christian boys had been taught the anti-Semitic ways of their parents.

By 1944, the Hungarian governor tried to break the alliance between Hungary and Germany, causing his removal from office. In March, the Arrow Cross, the pro-German, anti-Semitic fascist party, took control of the country. Jews were forced to move to Star of David houses, apartment buildings that were overcrowded with Jewish families who had to squeeze into a single room for living space. When the Jews in the Star of David Houses were ordered to move to the Ghetto, the Rajna family went into hiding in a secret room of their bakery. The bakery was located in the State Railroad office building opposite the Western Railroad Station.

Because they were hiding in the bakery, the Rajna family, including Jussi's aunt, lived reasonably well. The bakery was still operated by trusted Christian employees and the family had an abundance of food. Jussi, being only nine years old at the time, was unaware of the situation surrounding him. His sister, Jutka, who was four years older, however, was

fully aware of the condition of the country and would often become hysterical out of fear. The family adjusted their schedule to sleep during the daytime and stay awake at night in order to avoid arousing the suspicion of the neighbors. When the bakery closed for the day, they would go to the cellar for food. Jussi's parents spent hours listening to the BBC, hoping that the British would come.

By late 1944, though, Budapest was surrounded by the Russian Army, and Hungarian and German troops needed places to sleep. Someone had told some soldiers about the abandoned bakery, and when the soldiers knocked the door down, they found the Rajna family. The police recognized the family as important members of the community, and told the Rajnas that they would notify the Arrow Cross of their discovery. But the police also promised to give the family the time it took for the Arrow Cross to come to the factory, to try to find another hiding place. Unfortunately, the family was unable to secure a new hiding place, and surrendered to the Arrow Cross when the fascists arrived.

The day they were captured was cold and foggy, and as Jussi tells it, there was an eerie atmosphere all around. On the way to the station, they saw bodies hung on lightpoles bearing signs saying, "*I am a Jew"* or "*I am a Communist*." A Hungarian resistance fighter who had been shooting at the Arrow Cross building had been caught, and the Arrow Cross was cutting and peeling his skin off with a razorblade to force him to say who else was involved. Jussi panicked with fear while his sister cried uncontrollably, and their parents had no idea what to do or say to relieve the situation. They were told by the officer guarding them, a poor peasant from the same town as Jussi's mother who had taken the job for the good salary but was disgusted by what he was forced to do, that Jews caught in hiding were often taken to the river and shot. Yet the bitter weather conditions saved them from this fate, as it was too cold to go to the river. The Rajna family was put in a cell whose walls were splattered with blood and which was permeated with the stench of death.

At the station, the family was shocked to hear the head of the Arrow Cross address Jussi's father as "Mister." Although Jussi's father could not recall the man, the man remembered him from a summer years before when Jussi's father had employed him in the restaurant. The official remembered how he had been warmly greeted upon entering the restaurant and how he had received a free meal before starting work. The officer informed the family that, with his word, the family could avoid death and either be sent to the ghetto or remain at the Arrow Cross station. Deciding that it would be best not to stay in the station as the Russians who were near would consider them Arrow Cross members, the family moved to the ghetto.

In the ghetto, the Jewish police met the Rajna family and gave them a small kitchen to stay in. Thankfully, however, Jussi had an uncle nicknamed Uncle Naci who was in a bigger apartment and was granted permission to have the family move in with him. The family had a single double bed for five people - Jussi, Jutka, Laszlo, Margit, and his father's sister. Jussi's memories of the ghetto were of a gruesome, overcrowded place. He would stay in bed most of the time to avoid the rest of the ghetto. The only food he received were

morsels of dirty bread. Thankfully in January 1945 he was liberated by the Russian troops. When they arrived, however, the Russian troops took many of the family's possessions such as their watches.

The family soon returned to the life they had known before the war. They were able to move back to their apartment as the people who had lived there while they were in hiding and in the ghetto were Hungarian refugees from Romania and had left the apartment tidy. They were fortunate, as all of their possessions had remained in the apartment including furniture and personal belongings. Jussi returned to school where he found that half of the students were now Jewish. He felt lucky to have both parents still alive and well, as almost all of his classmates had at least one parent perish during the war.

The years following were adventurous for Jussi as well. He followed the path of his father and became a baker. He took night school classes to receive a high school diploma. Although he was rejected by engineering school in communist Hungary, after escaping to Sweden in 1956 he graduated as a mechanical engineer from the KTH in Stockholm He met his wife Lena in Sweden and they came to the Bay Area in 1966. Now retired, he lives with his wife and attends synagogue at Congregation Beth David. His story is also part of the Steven Spielberg Shoah collection. Jussi has been a huge part of the Jewish community and brought a kosher bakery to the Bay Area. I was connected to him before I was even two weeks old, as he made the cake for my baby naming. In many respects, Jussi is a true survivor and hero. His story provides evidence that the Jewish population will never die.

Livia Grunfeld

By Barry Rosekind

Livia Grunfeld comes from a big family. There were ten children, five boys and five girls. Her father was a landowner in Micula, a small town near Satu Mare, Romania. He grew crops, managed the land, and had employees. Livia, born in 1925, was the seventh child in her family.

Satu Mare was a half a day away by train from Budapest in those days. Budapest belonged to Hungary during the War. Unfortunately, Hitler gave that part of Romania which was disputed with Hungary, back to Hungary. Romania did not deport Jews instead they killed them themselves.

At that time, Satu Mare had a very nice Jewish community. It was a small town, of about 2,000 people. There were about 150 Jews, twenty five families. There existed a synagogue, but no rabbi. The town did have a schoichet and mikvah. Her family was very orthodox, but modern orthodox, meaning no big beard. They kept Shabbos and a kosher home. They read books, her father played chess and the violin. Her brother has their father's chess set, and now his son has it. (They didn't find his violin.)

Relations with the non-Jews in the town were mixed. There were good people and bad people. Before her parents were taken to the ghetto from their small town to the city, her mother had to prepare what they would take with them. They didn't have bags like we have today. She had to sew bags from material. Her sewing machine wasn't working, and she went to her neighbor to use their sewing machine. Another neighbor saw this, and reported to the police that a Jewish woman had gone into a non-Jewish house. Luckily a Jewish girl was there and heard this. And she ran immediately and told her to" go home because they're coming for you."

There were, of course, no televisions or newspapers at that time. She remembers hearing in town that Hitler had occupied Austria. She went home and didn't mention it to her father. Her parents heard the news, and she told them she already knew that. Her father told her that next time she hears something, she should tell him. "My father was a very gentle man, he wouldn't hurt a fly. But he had ten children, and he said if he could kill this man (Hitler), he would."

Before the War they had a good life, and never considered leaving. It was poor people who left, looking for better lives. Her parents had lived in another town, and then moved to this town. It was modern, not like a shtetl. Her parents had mostly Jewish friends but she had some non Jewish friends at school. Her brothers all went to cheder.

One brother and her father went to Bratislava yeshiva – the best yeshiva in Europe in those days which was in Czechoslovakia. Her parents were born in Hungary then moved to Transylvania, which later became Romania. The children went to Romanian schools.

When the Nazis occupied Hungary on March 19, 1944, she was already in Budapest. Her father immediately wrote a letter saying she should come home at once. The next day she received another letter from him, saying "if you can, stay there." This saved her from Auschwitz. Her father's first reaction was to bring all his children home to him, but he quickly changed his mind, realizing something was going on. Everyone in their small town knew she was Jewish. But she could get lost in Budapest. Livia was then nineteen years old. She was finished with school and wanted more than anything to go to university, but it was no longer possible. She would have to go by train, and it was already too dangerous. There was a Jewish college student who came and taught her, and her father taught her, mostly mathematics because he couldn't read a Romanian textbook. G-D paid her back because her grandson now goes to one of the best universities in the world. And as he told her, "she is paid back with interest."

The family's land was confiscated right away in 1944. The Hungarians there occupied the land and they marched into Transylvania. They were anti-Semites, but not like Hitler. Hungarians were using their land. Her father and oldest brother were sent to a labor camp and her four other brothers were together in another camp in Ukraine. The Hungarians were fighting the Germans, and used the Jews to work in the camps. Livia's father came home, but without his son. He wrote to the Red Cross asking about him. One day as they were eating lunch, they received a letter from the Red Cross. Her father opened the letter, even though it was Shabbos. He never opened mail on Shabbos, but when he saw it came from the Red Cross, he opened it. It was the ugliest letter. It said he 'had died of old age". He was a twenty six year old strong, healthy boy. People died because they were starving and had no more strength. Three people came back from that camp, one was a friend, and told them that they were very hungry. People put poison in meat and offered it to people, and her brother died this way.

Livia was with one of her brothers in Budapest in the ghetto. They used young girls as nurses. There were no medications, but the girls helped to take care of mostly old Jewish people in the Budapest ghetto. A boy came in and asked to shower in the area where she was working. They were chatting a little, asking each other where they were from. He told her where he had come from, and she told him she had a brother there, and her brother's name, Andy Samuel. This boy told her "he's right here in the ghetto, and here's his address." She ran right away to go find him. The Russians and Germans were already hiding in Budapest, and it was very dangerous for her to walk there. She ran from house to house, carefully hiding as she went, and found her brother! They had taken him from a labor camp and put him in the ghetto. When the Russians came, they closed Budapest and put them in the ghetto. The labor camp was close to Budapest, and they did not know what to do with these people.

One time during the day, airplanes were flying overhead and many parachutes were dropping. The parachutes were filled with ammunition for the Germans as they had no way to get to Budapest. If they landed on a house, it killed people but they did not care.

The area used as the ghetto wasn't a Jewish area. They picked an area that was not a slum, but it was crowded. The Hungarians took over Jewish homes, and gave them away. In the ghetto, they didn't know what was going on in the rest of Europe. They couldn't listen to the radio because radios were confiscated from Jews. Livia didn't know if there was resistance activity in Budapest, but there was possibly resistance from the Communists. The Communist leader denounced the Germans, but another leader came in. The Hungarian Nazis came in and were very bad to the Jews.

Livia was taken at 3 in the morning. She was with another girl. These were Hungarian Nazis who came after them. Germans were there too, but didn't do anything to them. The Nazis came in and slapped them; they were put in jail. She was asked who she was, and speaking Romanian, said they were refugees from Transylvania. One solder liked her, and kissed her cheek. These soldiers called each other "brother". This soldier told the other, "Brother, these girls are telling the truth," and they were released but other Jewish girls were tortured.

There wasn't much food. In jail, Livia was given one portion of soup and one piece of bread. "It was the best soup in my life." She was so hungry.

When Livia was in hiding, a boy who knew where she was hiding was caught. They beat him, and he told them where she was. That was when they put her in the ghetto after a week in the jail, instead of in the Danube. Every evening, two boys would disappear. They were told they went to work for the Germans. This boy, who came to take a shower, told her how they would tie two boys together, shoot one of them, and throw them together in the Danube. It was winter, and the Danube was very cold. He was tied to another boy, and the other boy was shot. He somehow freed himself and swam to the other side. The Nazis were still celebrating this activity. He tried to be quiet, but his teeth were chattering so badly, he was afraid they would hear him. He put his hands in his mouth to try to be quiet. He managed to crawl to a house and the people were good to him. They gave him dry clothes, but wouldn't let him stay. He had no place to go, so he went to the ghetto.

Livia lived out the war in the ghetto. It was only about three weeks. They were occupied on March 19, 1944 and liberated January 18, 1945. In the ghetto, her brother had the job of collecting dead bodies. There was no burial. He had the job of stacking bodies in a room in a building. He was only 21 years old. Budapest was heavily bombed in the War but Budapest's Jews were not deported.

After the war, Livia went back to her parents' house. Her sister went ahead of her, and her brother was already there since he had been liberated in August. She went by

train, and nobody was home when she arrived. One of her neighbors saw her and invited her in. She couldn't go in as she just wanted to go home. Their dog was at their home, and had survived the War somehow.

Five of Livia's immediate family survived the war. Her parents and five of her siblings died in Auschwitz. Someone who had been on the train with her parents when they were deported to Poland came back and told her they didn't know where they were being taken. But as her father read the signs at the train stations, he said, "we are lost." "He knew right away." Those in Budapest didn't know about Auschwitz. Then when they heard stories, they didn't believe them. Seventy people on Livia's mother's side were killed in Auschwitz – cousins, aunts, uncles… One uncle from her mother's side survived. Her parents "were only 56 years old. They must have been horribly humiliated being forced to undress in front of everyone before the gas chambers, to be naked in front of everybody…"

Livia married her husband in Romania after the war. She had known him before the war, as he was a friend of one of her brothers. When Livia and her family finally left Satu Mare, they never returned. Livia had wanted to leave for years. But finally one day in 1963, her husband agreed it was time to get out of there. They had been married there, and their two sons were born there. Their sons were now nine and seventeen. But after the war, the communists took everyone's land, not just the Jews', and there was nothing left for them. On April 13, 1964, Livia, her husband, and their two sons came to the United States. They left Romania and went to Italy to wait for a visa. She very much wanted to go to Israel. She had a brother and sister there. But her son wanted to go to America, and she couldn't say no to her son.

Being able to participate in this process was a very important thing for me. Even though I have grown up in a Jewish environment and have learned about the Holocaust and the atrocities the Nazis committed numerous times, every time I listen to a survivor's story, there are still parts that shock me and even scare me. Lillian was very welcoming and told her story gladly. Every story needs to be heard.

Pearl Parnes

By Julian Lewis

The Holocaust was a horrible era in history, a gruesome event. Many people think they know enough about the Holocaust: six million Jews were tortured and murdered by the Nazis. But how can anyone fully understand something without firsthand witnesses? Jews in the Holocaust had terrible experiences, suffering trauma and physical injuries. Some survivors were so horrified by their past that they refused to share it with anyone. However, there are some survivors who are willing to tell their stories so people can learn from them. Pearl Parnes, a resident of San Jose, California, is one such survivor who wishes to tell the world her account. It is a fascinating tale of evasion, great loss and survival in a time of peril. It all began in the big city of Lwow, Poland.

On June 10, 1921, Pearl Parnes was born in Lwow and lived there for six years. She had a very normal childhood. She resided there until her family moved to the town of Sanok where she lived until the beginning of the war. At that time, Sanok had a pretty large Jewish population, over twenty-five percent. Pearl was fairly active in the Jewish community. In addition to her public school education, she attended Hebrew School on a daily basis and belonged to a Zionist organization named Akiba. This organization taught young people about Jewish history and Zionism and prepared them to immigrate to Palestine. Pearl was very lucky to get a higher education; many children could not afford to go to middle school because it was too expensive. In fact, Pearl was very content with her life until it was turned upside-down when the Germans annexed Poland in 1939.

The town of Sanok had a river called the San. That river became the dividing point between German occupied Poland and Russian occupied Poland. Pearl's family lived on the German side. Before the Germans arrived, many young people, especially Jewish males, ran away from home to more distant regions in Poland. Her father had fled to the Russian side like most of the men at the time because they were afraid of persecution from the Germans. However, women and children were believed to be safer than men at the time so they remained in their homes.

Her extended family, including her aunts and her grandfather, came to live with her because the aunts' husbands had also fled and her grandfather was old. During the first months of occupation, a Jewish committee was established to deal with the German occupation. All the new rules and restrictions were announced through this committee. Anyone who had gold, silver or other valuables was required to bring them to the magistrate under penalty of death. The Germans would walk into Jewish stores and take whatever they wanted without paying. Jews were only allowed to be in the street during certain hours. Since the food lines were so long because of shortages, they often did not have

enough time to get what they needed.

The River San had a bridge that connected the German side with the Russian side and people were able to go back and forth freely. During this time, Pearl's sister, Regina, went over to the Russian side and stayed with their father. Soon after the occupation began, the Germans announced that, up until a certain date, people could continue to cross. However, after that date the bridge would be closed. At that time, Pearl's mother decided that Pearl too should join her father and sister on the other side. Her mother did not come because her father didn't think that she should risk being away from home and felt that as a woman she would be safer there.

Pearl crossed the bridge with money and other possessions to bring to other people from her town that had previously fled to the Russian side. She and other Jews who crossed the bridge initially stayed with a Jewish farmer on the other side. She left her suitcase there until she found her father and then went back to retrieve the suitcase. At this time, she learned that all the Jews who crossed the bridge later the same day that she crossed had been shot in the back and fallen into the river. After the war Pearl learned from her sister-in-law that the Jews who remained in Sanok, including her mother, grandfather and other family members, were placed in a ghetto, which was ultimately liquidated. All the people were shot to death. Pearl's sister-in-law was in the ghetto at that time. She survived because she learned that the ghetto was about to be destroyed and, with nine other people, dug a bunker. They stayed there safely until they were out of food and water. When they uncovered the bunker, they were shocked to see that there were no people or buildings remaining. Still afraid, they ran off and hid with Polish farm families and somehow managed to survive.

Pearl's husband-to-be, Israel, was also one of the men who fled across the river before the Germans arrived. With a group of young people, he traveled to Romania to seek transportation to go to Palestine, but when he heard that Pearl had come over to the Russian side of the river, he came back and they were able to be together for the rest of the war.

Within a week of crossing the border, Pearl, her father, her sister and her fiancé moved farther away from the border to the city of Sambor, also under Russian occupation. They stayed there for one year. During this time, Pearl's sister, Regina, got married and moved to another town in Poland under Russian occupation with her husband. Fortunately, they kept in close touch and visited weekly. In 1941, Pearl and Israel also were married.

Soon, there was a registration where people could choose to stay in Russia and become citizens or return to their homes in Poland. Wanting to be back with their families, most of the Jews, including Pearl's family, chose to return to their homes. So, one Friday night, Russian soldiers came during the night and told them that they should pack up their belongings and take whatever they could carry because they were going back home. They were very excited to be reunited with the rest of their family. Regina was visiting at the time and Pearl and her father asked her to join them but she refused because she was married and wanted to remain with her husband. That night was the last time the family saw her.

However, rather than being sent back home to Poland as they were told, they were sent to Siberia because the Russians felt that the Jews, who refused to become Russian citizens, could not be trusted. They embarked on a trip that took nearly two months. They traveled by train, by boat, by horse and eventually by foot. They left Poland during the summer and by the time they arrived, there was snow on the ground in Siberia.

There was no decent housing, merely one packed barrack that housed over 1,000 Jewish people. The climate was terrible, with temperatures reaching 40 degrees below zero. Only four months of the year were tolerable with daylight and some amount of warmth. They were living in an absolute wilderness -- no stores, no people, no newspapers, no radio, nothing, just forests. The only Russian people who lived there were convicts who were forced to look for gold. During the four summer months, ships would arrive and would bring supplies for the rest of the year. Otherwise, they had no contact with the outside world.

Pearl's father and husband were able to build a small house with other people, which consisted of one room with eight occupants. There was only room for the beds and nothing else. After about two years, they were sent to live in a bigger city in Siberia called Ykuck where Pearl and Israel had a son named Chaim. There they learned about the war from wounded Russian soldiers who were returning from the front to their homes. Pearl found out that the Germans were losing the war. In 1945, the war was finally over but they didn't know what would happen to them as they were stranded in Siberia. They had no money, no papers, no passports and no means to travel.

Fortunately, the Polish government, now allied with the Russians, requested that Polish citizens be returned to Poland. All the Jewish Poles throughout Russia were sent back to Poland. Jewish centers were established throughout Poland where survivors could list their names and look up the names of other survivors. Everybody was busy trying to find loved ones. After the liberation, Pearl's sister-in-law came to Sanok and learned that her brother and family survived and found them living in Germany. She was able to tell them about the liquidation of the ghetto and what happened to Pearl's mother and the rest of the family.

Pearl, Israel, Chaim and her father were sent from one place to another until they ended up in a displaced persons camp in Wetzlar, Germany, where Pearl's father died.

They lived in Germany for four years until 1950, when they were able to immigrate to the United States. They settled in New York City where they resided for many years. Pearl and her husband had two more children, a daughter named Gilda and a son named Jay. They were very happy in their new country and were able to lead normal lives once again.

Pearl Parnes' story illustrates the real horrors of the Holocaust. Her story is extraordinary and it is miraculous that she came through alive. We are lucky that people like Pearl can tell their stories so others who have never experienced anything similar can understand and know about the Holocaust. Without learning from people like Pearl, people will forget all

Assembly Member Lloyd Levine
AD40

Is honored to present
the stories of Holocaust Survivors

Eva Brown

❖

George Brown

❖

Renee Firestone

❖

Dorothy Greenstein

❖

Mathilda Pardo

❖

Gloria Ungar

Eva Brown

Eva Brown was born in Hajdwboszormeny, Hungary on August 24, 1927. The daughter of Rabbi Salomon Rosenfeld and Rebbetzin Rozsi Heiman Rosenfeld, she was raised in a very wonderful and secure environment along with her three brothers and three sisters. Her father was a very wise Orthodox rabbi and a great leader, and her mother had a very charitable heart. Eva attended a Jewish elementary school and then went to Jublie Middle School in Putnok, a Hungarian border town where her family lived.

When Hitler occupied Hungary and the Jews were forced to wear the yellow star, Eva was embarrassed to go out on the street. In April 1944, her family had to move to the Putnok Ghetto. Only a month later Eva, her mother, her 7-year-old brother Victor, and her 11-year-old sister Valerie were gathered in Diosgyor Ironworks and shipped to Auschwitz. She remembers arriving at Auschwitz and being split from the rest of her family. She watched her mother walking next to her little brother and sister headed immediately towards the gas chambers. Eva was sent to the other side, processed into the camp and tattooed with A-17329. Within two weeks she was moved to Krakow Plaszow, the infamous camp in Schindler's List. After six weeks she was sent back to Auschwitz. At end of September, Eva was transferred to Augsburg, Germany and remained there for seven months. In April 1945 the Nazis dragged them through Muhldorf on a death march to Caufering and finally to Feldafing, where she arrived ill with typhus and was liberated by the American army. After she recovered, she returned to Hungary.

Eva's father survived, and later they were reunited. Her sisters Iren and Aranka survived Bergen-Belsen and settled in Budapest. Her brother Sandor also survived, migrated to Israel, and subsequently passed away in the 1948 war. Her brother Andor passed away in Koszeg, a Hungarian forced labor camp. In 1948, Eva met Erno Brown, a Holocaust survivor, and married him. Together they emigrated to the United States, where they raised their children. They have two daughters born here, Nancy Linda and Sandra Jean. They also have a granddaughter named Kimberly.

Courtesy of the Museum of Tolerance

George Brown

George Brown was born in Hungary on February 12, 1929. His family consisted of his mother, father, two brothers, one sister, and himself. They were all together until the ghetto was established in April 1944. On June 2nd of the same year they were all sent to Auschwitz-Birkenau. Upon arrival, his mother and sister were separated from the rest of the family never to be seen again.

On June 6, 1944, the men in the Brown family were forced to board a train that took them to Hausdorf, Lower Sileria in Germany. They had to work in a camp there called Wolfsberg, which was a satellite camp of Gross-Rosen. In December 1944, both of George's brothers were separated from him and his father and were taken to a hospital camp in Wustegizdorf. By the end of January 1945, the hospital camp was moved to Bergen-Belsen, Germany, where both of his brothers died.

Not long after being separated from his brothers, George and his father were sent to Ebensee concentration camp, where his father died on March 28, 1945. On May 6, 1945 the Americans liberated George.

After the Holocaust, George moved to Canada, where he worked as a furrier. On February 18, 1951, he got married in Toronto, Canada. Then in 1952 he and his wife moved to the United States where they had two kids. He retired in 1991, and for the past 6 years has been traveling to Hungary to share his experiences at schools and colleges. He is also a volunteer speaker at the Museum of Tolerance in Los Angeles, Calif.

Courtesy of the Museum of Tolerance

Renee Firestone

Noted community leader, Renee Firestone, was born in the former Czechoslovakia and raised in Hungary.

The Germans were losing to the Allies in March 1944 when the Nazis decided to send the Jews of Hungary to the concentration camps, and subsequently, at the tender age of 19, Renee was imprisoned for 13 months in the infamous concentration camp, Auschwitz/ Birkenau during the last years of World War II. Her entire family was murdered expect for her father Morris, who died of tuberculosis shortly after liberation, and her brother, who was a partisan.

Following liberation in May of 1945, Renee was reunited with her brother and her soon-to-be husband, Bernard. She settled in Prague, Czechoslovakia, where she completed her education in the Prague School of Commercial Arts.

In 1948, Renee immigrated to the United States with Bernard and her infant daughter, Klara. After arriving here, she pursued her love of fashion, becoming a noted designer.

No stranger to the Los Angeles Jewish Community, Renee Firestone is a tireless leader in many areas of social justice and Holocaust remembrance and education.

She is most known as the founding lecturer for the Simon Wiesenthal Center's Educational Outreach Program. She lectures to adults and students of all ages and walks of life throughout the United States and abroad about her experiences as a Holocaust survivor Renee has been invited on many occasions to address the various braches of the United States military including the Marines, Air Force, and Army. She is a presenter in the "Tools For Tolerance Program," addressing teachers and members of various local law enforcement agencies on issues relating to cultural diversity and sensitivity.

Renee has conducted workshops for educators entitled " Human Rights and Genocide," lectured at the Annual Convention of the California Council for Social Studies: and has also been the subject of countless television, radio, and print media interviews regarding the Holocaust and its contemporary implications.

Renee served three times as president of Shelters for Israel and is on the Board of the Council of Post-War Jewish Holocaust Organizations of Southern California. She was also honored by Israel Bond with the Elie Wiesel Holocaust Remembrance Meda.

For the past seven years, Renee has been involved as a trainer and interviewer with Steven Spielberg's "Survivors of the Shoah Visual History Foundation," an organization founded to document the testimonies of the last remaining survivors of the Holocaust, righteous Gentiles, and military liberators.

Lastly, Renee was recently rewarded for all her tireless efforts by being one of five survivors whose experiences were featured in the film *The Last Day,* which received the 1998 Oscar for the Best Feature Length Documentary.

Dorothy Greenstein

Dorothy Greenstein was born Devorah Kirszenbaum on December 10, 1930 in Otwock, Poland. Her father was a cantor, rabbi, and shochet. He also served as a judge for the Jewish community. Devorah had six sisters and two brothers. She attended a public school where there were separate religion classes for Jews and Christians. Devorah was curious about Christianity and attended both classes. This later helped her to hide her identity during the war.

Shortly after the war started, the Jews of Otwock were forced into the Otwock ghetto. Devorah was able to leave the ghetto to obtain food. Warned of impending roundups, Devorah's father insisted that she and her sisters go into hiding. Devorah went to the home of a court reporter, Ludwiczek, but was advised to return to the ghetto since there were no Germans in the area. She did so, only to learn that the Germans were coming. While fleeing, she had difficulty climbing a fence at the ghetto's border. Not realizing that Devorah was Jewish, a German soldier assisted her over the fence. She and her sister Rachel later hid with a Polish sergeant.

Taking the advice of the sergeant, the sisters hid in an outhouse to avoid Germans who were searching the area with dogs. The sisters took a train to Parysow and lived in the ghetto until the sergeant came and warned them of impending deportation. Devorah and Rachel hid on a farm for a few days before returning to Otwock. Devorah then went to the Karczew labor camp, where her sister Tofka, brother-in-law Marek, and brother Itzhak were incarcerated. She hid in the barracks for a few weeks.

When Germans searched the camp, Devorah fled and was allowed to hide in a farmer's field. Devorah was discovered by a Polish park ranger who wanted to hand her over to the Germans, but the farmer's wife protected her. Devorah then left town and found shelter with her parents' former laundress, with whom she stayed until the end of winter. Asked to leave, she returned to her sister Tofka, in Karczew. Assisted by an acquaintance of Tofka's, Devorah left for Warsaw, secured a birth certificate, and worked as a maid. During the Warsaw Polish Uprising, she and the family for which she worked left the city. They eventually went to Krakow where Devorah was hospitalized after contracting typhus. Once released, she worked for another family until the liberation of Warsaw by Soviet armed forces.

Courtesy of the Museum of Tolerance

Mathilda Pardo

Mathilda Pardo was born in Ioaninna, Greece on May 15, 1920. She had a big family that consisted of her father, Chaim Battino, her mother Rosina, and her five brothers Samuel, Chaim, Aaron, Leon, and Uriel. Mathilda was the youngest of the family and the only girl.

Ioannina was in the Italian Zone of Greece. The country was divided amongst Germany's allies into a German Zone, Bulgarian Zone, and Italian Zone. Jews living in the German Zone were among the first to feel the impact of the Nazi's occupation in Greece. The Italians, who ran the Italian Zone up until they surrendered in September 1943, did not concern themselves with liquidating their region of Jews. When the German's took over the Italian Zone after the fall of Italy to Allied Forces, they finally put their liquidation plan into action

When the Nazis took over Greece, in 1944 Mathilda's entire family was taken to Auschwitz, where they stayed until liberation on January 27, 1945. The only survivors from her family were her brother Uriel, who now lives in Athens, Greece, and herself.

Greek Jewry was almost totally destroyed by Hitler's "Final Solution." In 1939 there were over seventy thousand Jews in Greece. These families lived in communities that had histories stretching back over two thousand years and could be traced back to medieval Islamic Spain. In 1945 the total Jewish population of Greece was given as ten thousand, with the majority of its members having died in Poland. In some towns a few Jews survived the deportations, emerged from hiding, or even survived the camps, and returned to find populations decimated. Crete's Jewish community vanished totally. In Zakynthos all the Jews were saved through the efforts of its archbishop and mayor, while in Corfu the mayor and chief of police declared a public holiday on the day the Jews were deported. From Salonika, 15 train loads over a period of eighteen months emptied the city of its Jews. The Bulgarians in the manner of Pilate handed the five thousand Jews of Thrace to the Germans on the Danube. Their fates were sealed at Treblinka.

In 1949 Mathilda married Sadi Eliezer Pardo, who was a prisoner of war for five years in Italy during the war. He lost his wife and three kids during the war. In 1951, they moved to the United States, where she worked for a men's cosmetic manufacturer for 20 years. Mathilda and her husband had three kids –Larry Eliezer, Rosina, and Esther- and raised them in the United States. She has since retired and is a full time volunteer with the Museum of Tolerance in Los Angeles where she

Courtesy of the Museum of Tolerance and "A Short History of the Jews of Greece" by Nikos Stavrolakis

Gloria Unger

Gloria Unger was born Gitta Nagel on September 9, 1930 in Krosno, Poland. Gitta was the daughter of Esther and Abish Nagel; had two older brothers, Yankel, born December 7, 1923, and Mordechai, born 1925; and a younger brother Nathan, born 1932. Jews in Krosno were engaged in small businesses and trade, such as, weaving, tailoring, and shoemaking. Anti-Semitism and economic boycotts were common. Before World War II, 2,500 Jews lived in Krosno; almost 6,000 more lived in the surrounding areas. Gitta's father Abish was a successful businessman and they lived comfortably. However, it all ended, in September 1939, with the German invasion of Poland.

Persecution of Jews began immediately, properties were confiscated and Jews were ordered to register with the authorities. People disappeared. In 1940, to avoid a similar fate, Abish, Gitta's father and her older brother Yankel were smuggled through the forest into neighboring Slovakia. Relatives provided Abish and Yankel with hiding places. Gitta, her mother and younger brothers stayed behind and struggled to survive. When persecution of Jews in Poland had become unbearable in the Spring of 1941, Gitta, her mother Esther, and her brother Nathan were smuggled into Slovakia. A Christian forester who could smuggle two or three people at a time assisted them. Half of the expensive fee was paid in advance and the second half was paid upon safe arrival in Slovakia. Mordechai remained behind with their grandmother, Sara Nagel, and planned to join the family later.

In December 1944, Gitta was deported from Auschwitz to Bergen-Belsen Concentration Camp in Germany. Toward the end of the war, as the Germans retreated, Gitta was transported to Braunschweig, a force labor camp in Germany. In April 1945, Gitta and the other inmates were pushed into cattle carts. They traveled for two weeks with no food, water or sanitation, headed toward an unknown destination. Many died from starvation and suffocation, and others were weakened from disease and malnutrition. Finally, the cattle cars stopped and doors were opened. Having learned that the war was over, the guards told the inmates that they were in Denmark. Dead bodies were unloaded, including Gitta who weighed 57 lbs., too weak to even signal that she was alive. With strenuous effort, she pulled herself away from the dead bodies. Sick with tuberculosis and a collapsed lung, Gitta was shipped to Sweden for treatment and recuperation. Two years later, in 1947, sixteen year old Gitta immigrated to the United States, followed by Yankel. Gitta's parents, brothers and grandparents perished in the Holocaust.

Courtesy of the Museum of Tolerance

Assemblywoman Fran Pavley
AD41

Is honored to present
the story of Holocaust Survivor

Albert Rosa

ALBERT ROSA

By Jenny Toder

Albert Rosa is a Sephardic Jew, who was born in Salonika, Greece on January 25, 1925. As the youngest boy of eight siblings, he was an athletic, handsome lad with bright blue eyes who liked sports, particularly boxing with his older brother Daniel. Although his father was a very religious man, Albert enjoyed the normal pursuits of a teenager, rather than studying Judaism or attending synagogue.

In 1939, when the Italians bombed Salonika, all this changed for Albert. He was in school at the time, and numerous children were killed or injured. The Germans occupied Greece soon after that. He was made to wear a yellow star on his chest. One day, his father went to open his business, a hardware store, and a sign said "This Property belongs to the Third Reich." The family lost the business, the Jewish homes were looted, and he was taken with all the young people to perform slave labor in Greece. For a year, Albert was assigned to a crew building roads, where he was beaten and numerous workers died from starvation or sickness.

Albert was now 15. One morning, the Germans barged into his home, beat the family with the butts of their rifles and threw his grandparents, parents and siblings into trucks. Wearing only his underwear and no shoes, Albert was loaded onto a truck with his brothers Daniel and David, but separated from the rest of his family. The trucks drove to the train station where they were loaded onto cattle cars. The men, women and children traveled for 10 days from Salonika east through the Greek peninsula to the Birkenau concentration camp in Germany, with no food, water or toilets. About 90 people shared the single cattle car, and when they arrived in Birkenau, about half were dead, the rest lying on top of the corpses.

Inside the car the heat was stifling, but as the door opened, they saw deep snow on the ground. Being used to the mild temperatures of Greece, this was a tremendous shock, and Albert was still only wearing his underwear and no shoes. The Germans yelled at them in German, but as Greek Jews of Spanish descent, Albert spoke only Greek, Spanish and Hebrew. Because they didn't understand the orders, the soldiers beat them. The language problem and adjusting to such drastic cold made it virtually impossible for these Sephardic Jews from Greece to survive.

A selection process began where everyone under the age of 16 was sent immediately to the gas chamber. Albert was only 15, but because he had such an athletic build from boxing, he could pass as an adult. He witnessed young mothers who would not give up

their young children beaten or shot right on the spot. There was a crematorium that burned continuously. In the barracks, the prisoners were given a single blanket and slept 8-10 on a wooden shelf. Because he was nearly naked, Albert's brothers took their blankets, piled them together and then slept with him huddled between them.

After many weeks, Albert longed for news of his older sister Luna, who acted as a second mother to him and cared for him as a baby. A friend from a different work group had seen her, so Albert decided he would give him his food for two days and arranged to switch uniforms with him to be able to see her again. He was able to find her, and they started to talk through a fence. Upon noticing them, a woman Nazi guard hit Luna with a billy club and kicked her and ordered her German Shepard to kill Albert. Because of his training as a boxer, he was able to fend off the attacks of the dog, but not without serious injuries. He believes that the guard did not shoot him because she was afraid she would kill the dog instead. Albert was barely conscious, and as he tried to look at his sister, he was continually beaten. A few hours later, two prisoners came and took Luna's body away; she had died. Albert and his brothers were absolutely devastated. A Jewish Greek doctor who was a prisoner in the camp, looked at his wounds and said there was nothing Albert could do and suggested he splint his finger with a stick and pour urine over his wounds.

About a month later, his work crew was ordered to dig a trench for a pipe to run to the kitchen. Albert could see potatoes in the kitchen and when he had the chance, he stole some. A guard noticed and attempted to shoot him with his rifle, but it jammed and so instead he began swinging his rifle, breaking a bone in Alberto's knee. His brother Daniel saw this and started to beat the guard. Albert tried to get up, but he couldn't. The guards attacked Daniel and knocked him unconscious. Prisoners were ordered to take him to the gallows, where he was hung.

In January, 1945, Albert and seven other prisoners escaped the "Birkenau Death March," where 25,000 prisoners were marched to their death, by running into the snow-filled woods. With German guards firing at them, they ran through thick branches which tore up their skin. Two of the escapees were shot and killed. To mislead the guards, Albert convinced the six men to deliberately walk backwards. After two days, the men discovered a farmhouse with an elderly German man who was missing a leg. He tried to shoot them, but missed. They ran into his barn, which was full of manure. Albert weighed about 90 pounds and was freezing. Despite the odor, the steam from the manure was like a jacuzzi to the six men. They covered themselves in it, hoping to get warm.

After a few days, they saw two soldiers approaching, but Albert noticed that they didn't look like Germans, as their complexion was darker. When Albert spoke in Spanish to his fellow prisoners, one of the soldiers said, "We are American soldiers of Mexican descent – what can we do to help you?" "We need food," they cried, and so they went back to the farmhouse to confront the elderly man who had tried to shoot them. There the American soldier asked Albert if he wanted to shoot him, as he had said he would kill a German after his sister and brother had been killed. But Albert couldn't do it, as the elderly man pleaded

for his life and said his whole family had been destroyed as well. They took as much food as they could and went to meet the American army. In a devastating twist, two of Albert's comrades died from eating too much too soon due to malnutrition; there were four men left.

They met up with the U.S. Army and for 4 months fought with them. After an officer got shot, Albert and one of his fellow escapees volunteered to go rescue him, while still in the line of fire. His friend got shot and killed and Albert got shot in the knee. When the war ended, the now three men, from the eight who had escaped Birkenau, were sent to the hospital at Camp Feldafin. He recuperated there for 3-4 months, gaining weight and exercising again at the hospital gym.

It was 1946. The Irgun, the Jewish Resistance Movement organized to fight against British restrictions on Jewish immigration and Arab forces, was recruiting members. Although he had never identified that strongly with Judaism as a boy, Albert, with no family left, decided he needed to do whatever possible to help create a Jewish homeland. While recruiting members on a trip to Salzburg, Austria in 1946, Albert noticed a beautiful blond girl at a displaced person camp. Her name was Betty Rosensweig and she was 16 years old. She was also a holocaust survivor and had lost her entire family. They married in 1947 and for two years, no one knew, not even Betty that Albert was working for the Irgun. In May, 1948, a few months before Israel became a state Albert was captured by the British for transporting arms, and put in prison in Cyprus, Greece. Because he was Greek, he made friends with a guard who helped him escape. Albert made his way back to Salzburg to Betty, who was pregnant. They got their visas and came with their 6-month old daughter to Denver, Colorado.

Albert learned English quickly, and became a successful upholsterer and store owner. On a trip to Disneyland with Betty and his children, they decided to move to Southern California. Despite only having an 8th grade education, he speaks 10 languages. He did not speak of his experience during the Holocaust until 1999, when his children urged him to share his remarkable story of survival.

Albert's family tried desperately to find out what happened to the rest of his family after they were separated that morning in Salonika. Unfortunately, they were never able to find any information and believe they all perished. The two men that successfully escaped with Albert from Birkenau also immigrated to the United States. Albert is retired and lives with Betty in Encino, in the San Fernando Valley. He is close with his children who also live in Southern California.

Albert speaks at the Museum of Tolerance in Los Angeles many times a month to students, law enforcement groups and other organizations. The response to his story of survival has been overwhelming, with standing ovations, piles of letters, lecture and book offers from those who have been so moved by this man's courage, will, and strength.

Assembly Member Todd Spitzer
AD71

Is honored to present
the story of Holocaust Survivor

Margo Guiness

Margo Guiness

By Brooke Armour

As the youngest of ten, Margo Guiness was rarely alone. After the Holocaust, Margo found herself truly alone for the first time, finding out that only two of her brothers survived the Holocaust. And on April 15, 2005, Margo traveled back to Bergen-Belsen, the concentration camp in which she was imprisoned, for the 60th anniversary of the liberation of the camp.

Margo remembers when the anti-Jewish propaganda began to spread in her home country of Czechoslovakia. Curfews mandated that Jews not be allowed outside after 8:00pm and her mother and she could only shop for food during certain hours, often standing in line only to have the stores run out of stock. Margo's father was a religious man and attended morning and evening prayers. Even after hearing first hand stories from prisoners who had escaped the death camps, Margo's father assured her that they must be exaggerated. "My father was a good man. None of us could understand what was going on. No one thought humanity was capable of such evil," Margo remembers. It was only when her family was forced to wear the Jewish star that they became truly frightened.

Then the day came when Margo and her family were ordered to the ghettos. Her older sister Bozena urged her parents not to relocate to the ghetto, but as a peaceful man, Margo's father believed it was for the best. Bozena, Margo's strength during the unbearable years to come, had secured false papers for herself and Margo, and together they fled to Budapest to hide. Their father bestowed a blessing upon them, the last words he would ever speak to his children. Margo's false papers had her age at seventeen, even though she was only thirteen. She was tall for her age, a trait that would come to save her life when she arrived at Auschwitz.

After several months in hiding in Budapest, the Gestapo arrest Margo and Bozena claiming they are spies. Margo is interrogated several times, each time receiving more severe beatings, but she never sways from her claim that she is a seventeen year old girl living in Budapest with her mother (Bozena). Margo and Bozena are imprisoned in Fo Utca prison in Budapest for several months before boarding a train to Auschwitz.

On the train ride to Auschwitz, Margo sees out the small window that Germany is in ruin. Buildings as far as the eye can see had been turned to rubble. This gives her hope that the war will be over soon and that she will be reunited with her family. Upon arriving at Auschwitz, Margo is asked her age and automatically answers seventeen, despite the fact that she is only thirteen. This saves her life. Children under the age of fourteen are automatically sent to the gas chambers. After only 24 hours at Auschwitz, Margo and her sister board another train to Ravensbruck. At this camp, not only are the prisoners forced

to supply slave labor but also are used as a source for medical experiments in a nearby clinic.

At Ravensbruck, Bozena gives up hope for survival and rescue. This only gives Margo a stronger determination to survive. Margo is a witness to history, and she must survive this so that she can tell people what happened in these camps so that the guilty can be punished and so that this will never happen again. Both Margo and Bozena begin loosing weight quickly. The prisoners work twelve hours a day on a 270 calorie diet. This diet has been specifically crafted so that the laborers will not die too soon, but also so that they will not live too long. Margo volunteers for extra work, and is placed in the kitchen, helping prepare meals for the officers. Every day she smuggles food back to her barracks, knowing that if she is caught she will die, but also knowing if she does not smuggle the food she will be dead anyways.

In late December 1944, Margo and her sister are relocated again to Dortmund, where they are forced to work in a V-2 Rocket Bomb factory. It is clear to Margo and the other prisoners that the war is coming to an end. The constant pounding of American air raids can be felt throughout the camp. Since they are a manufacturing V-2 Rocket Bombs, the factory in which Margo and the other prisoners work is a constant target. "During one night raid, a bomb fell on the shelter next to ours and killed all the male deportees in that shelter, up to 600 prisoners," Margo recounts. As the German front continues to fall back closer to Dortmund, Margo and the other prisoners are again relocated to their final death camp, Bergen-Belsen.

The train to Bergen-Belsen does not go far before it comes to a screeching halt where the track has been destroyed by an air raid. The prisoners are forced off the train and start walking down the tracks. Those who are too weak to walk stay behind in the train and are immediately executed. It is a two week march from where the train ended to Bergen-Belsen. With no food or water the entire time, many did not survive the trek and are simply discarded on the side of the tracks. Margo is carried by her sister and a friend the last two miles to Bergen-Belsen.

At Bergen-Belsen Margo desperately tries to find out about her family members, running from barrack to barrack. She cannot find anyone who knows the fate of her family. However, she does find one girl around her same age and they quickly become friends. The friend, from Amsterdam, Holland is only a year older than Margo and they engage in "girl talk" to pass the time. Margo's friend, Anne Frank, did not survive Bergen-Belsen, succumbing to the Typhus outbreak that ravaged the camp.

Margo also contracted Typhus while at Bergen-Belsen and barely survives. However, one day she looks up to the sky and saw that it was raining umbrellas. The umbrellas in the sky are in fact British paratroopers. On April 15, 1945, Bergen-Belsen is liberated by British troops. At first, Margo does not believe that her camp had been liberated. It is only when the camp commandant, Josef Kramer, is forced by the British troops to remove

the dead bodies from the floor of the barracks to the mass grave just outside of camp that Margo knows she is indeed free.

At the time of her liberation, Margo weights less than 50 pounds. The SS had stopped feeding the prisoners ten days prior, anticipating liberation. Margo and her sister are transported to Sweden, where Margo is able to slowly recover. Bozena, however, has Milliard Tuberculosis and will not survive. Margo spends every day with her sister until, several months later, her sister passes away. It is only then that she begins to look for the rest of her family, but only two brothers have survived and are currently living in Paris.

After living in Paris for a few months, Margo moves to America, where she is still blessed to reside. "I love the weather here. It is always sunny and that is very therapeutic. My childhood was so dark. The sun does a lot to help me." Margo says.

Every anniversary, Margo travels to Bergen-Belsen. Each time, there are fewer survivors. But the memory of the horrors experienced by Margo, Bozena, and millions of other Jewish people lives in the stories survivors tell.

Assembly Member Juan Vargas
AD79

Is honored to present
the story of Holocaust Survivor

Gussie Zaks

Gussie Zaks

By Tanya Aldaz

A moving and powerful account of Gussie Zaks, a victim of the Holocaust, as she vividly recalls her story of survival:

THE LINE OF FATE

Gussie Zaks was the youngest of seven children born in Poland. She was only thirteen in 1939 when the Nazi attack on her country changed her life forever. Separated from her parents, four sisters and two brothers, she endured the horrific conditions in five labor camps before being liberated by the British on April 15, 1945.

It was only happenstance that saved Gussie from being abducted along with her family. The day that the Nazi's invaded her home she was out doing her daily chores and returned home to an empty house. She instantly realized that her entire family had been taken to Treblinka, an extermination camp in Poland, where they were ultimately murdered by the practice of Judenrein (German: cleansing of Jews). Gussie was later captured by the Nazi's and was sent to an open-camp within the city.

Gussie was later transported to an all-girls selection camp in Blechhammer, Poland. When she arrived, Nazi soldiers had administered two separate lines. It was made painfully clear that if you were selected to go to the line to the left, you were to die. If you were selected to go to the line to the right, you were to live. Thousands of women, all different ages, waited around until their fate would be determined. The women whose lives were spared were sent to a working camp, where they would be overwhelmed with slave labor, struggle and fear.

At the selection camp, Gussie vividly remembers a conversation with friends of her late mother. One of the older women told her, "Look at you, you will never make it."

"Children had no chance of surviving; it did not matter if you were seven or ten, not even beauty mattered," explains Gussie.

She knew instantly that she did not fit the profile the German Nazi's were looking for. Gussie peered about and trembled with fear at the sight of boundless taller and stronger women. However, with her determination to live she told the others, "I don't want to die; I want to go with you." Within moments, Nazi soldiers herded the Jewish girls together like cattle. Once corralled into tight groups, the soldiers quickly began to assess the

prisoners. Height, weight and build were all critical features the Nazi regime sought for their workforce. Gussie was fifteen at the time, but her skinny, fragile body made her look as if she was seven.

For the next five hours her family friends raised her to help her appear as if she was the proper height and stature for the working camp. She was miraculously selected and directly sent to a labor camp.

Her five years of struggle, terror and fear started at dawn when she and her fellow inmates were awakened at 5:00 a.m. each morning for roll call, marched six miles to the construction site, and forced to work ten to twelve hours a day under the duress of intense labor.

Her one meal per day consisted of "…two to three slices of bread and cold soup, sometimes just water, nothing else." Gussie notes that the quantity of food was minute, "you were always hungry but you could survive."

Gussie emphasized that "escaping" wasn't the solution to surviving. She remembers an encounter where she had to march past the body of a young woman who had been shot while trying to escape.

THE DEATH MARCH

In 1944, after three and half years at the labor camp, Gussie heard some shooting. Thinking they were finally free, Gussie remembers that, "it was too good to be true." In the middle of night, the Germans lined up everyone in the camp and marched tens of thousands of sick, emaciated and famished prisoners to their death.

"We would march all day and at night we slept in barns with the rats and mice crawling over us," expressed Gussie. "In the morning we would march again, with no food, but just snow to eat and wash our faces with."

"We never worried about the next morning because we never knew if there was going to be a tomorrow," explained Gussie. "For all we knew they could have killed us all overnight." Gussie painfully recalls that they marched like this for 20 weeks and for no reason at all. "They did not know what to do with us. We didn't die fast enough and they could not kill us fast enough. Every day they left behind more and more girls who could not march any longer."

When they arrived to the men's camp of Flossenberg they were told to take a shower. "We were afraid because we knew showers often meant death, but we had had no showers for three months. We did not care anymore; at this point we thought it would be easier to be dead than alive." As she marched down to the shower, Gussie emotionally recalled, "the first thing we had to do was take off our clothes, and then they shaved our heads and

sprayed us with lice spray like a bunch of animals and pushed us in. Once we were inside we said our good-byes, thinking we were about to die. But luckily water came out of the showers, not gas. After the shower they gave us clothes from other dead people and marched again."

After days of not knowing what the Nazi's were going to do with them. The soldiers threw them into the train boxes like a herd of cattle. They were given no food, water, or toilets. Many people painfully died in the train box due to starvation and cruel abandonment from the Nazi's. After three days of desperation, the doors to the train box opened. Gussie, recounted "Most of the girls around me were dead, as soon as the doors opened, I jumped off and once again marched into the torturous camp of Bergen-Belsen.

LIFE AT BERGEN-BELSON

Bergen-Belsen, the fifth working camp where Gussie was held, contained no gas chambers. Despite the lack of an extermination facility, more than 35,000 people died of starvation, overwork, disease, and brutality.

When she arrived to Bergen-Belsen there were no empty barracks. She and her inmates waited in front of the barracks for about five hours while the soldiers took out all of the dead bodies, "I remember the soldiers cleaned out a room with no lights, no windows and full of dead bodies, making room for as many as 1,000 girls to sleep in the barracks."

There was absolutely no room for me to stretch, "I thought of the body behind me as my pillow and the body in front of me as my covers, we were sleeping on top of each other" said Gussie. But every day there was more and more room because they kept on losing more girls. "People died every night due to exhaustion and starvation," said Gussie. "We became like animals, we were always thinking about how we could get more food. I was eighty percent dead and 20 percent alive, barely, barely, walking. Two more days and I would have joined the rest of them."

FREEDOM

Bergen-Belsen was liberated by the British on April 15, 1945. Gussie remembers vividly the day the British came to free them, "I was eighteen years old and too weak to stand." The day they were liberated, a man wearing a green uniform in a tank with a loud speaker began shouting to them in English that they were free, "but who understood English?" Gussie, who didn't speak English at the time said, "They spoke in English and we didn't understand what they were saying." It was only after the soldiers opened the gates and began giving out water that the prisoners began to understand. Their long awaited prayers seemed as if they had finally been answered. "Unfortunately, 10,000 girls died because they drank the water too fast." explained Gussie. "Our weak bodies were unable to handle large amounts of water." Gussie's weakness and mal-nourishment caused her to catch typhoid fever and all sorts of other infections. She was sent to a hospital in Sweden

where she convalesced there.

GUSSIE ZAKS TODAY

When I asked Gussie how she felt having survived the Holocaust, she smiled gratefully and said "lucky." It's tough to imagine why, given the tortuous ordeal she endured for almost five years.

A story of survival often ends with the lifetime that follows. A near-death experience brings an entirely new outlook to those who defy it and live to tell it.

Gussie's happiness today is attributed to her marriage with Mike Zaks, also a survivor. They live in San Diego, California and have two grown children and several grandchildren.

Gussie, with her husband's support, visits hundreds of students in San Diego County school districts to re-live the horrors of the Holocaust and provide youth a moment to reflect and ask her questions.

For some survivors it is not a choice, but an obligation to reach out to future generations. There is unquestionably something more powerful and commanding when a story is told first-hand by a person who sheds a tear or pauses by the pain of a memory before continuing.

Assembly Member Gene Mullin
AD19

Is honored to present
the story of Holocaust Survivor

Tom Szelenyi

Tom Szelenyi

By Dinah Shender

Tom Szelenyi was born into a moderately well off Jewish family in Budapest. He lived with his father, a businessman, and mother, a housewife, in a spacious apartment. Anti-Semitism existed, but he laughed it off. In 1944 he was 16. That was the year that Nazis came.

Hungary was the last country to be invaded by the Nazis, on March 19, 1944. The Nazis quickly began imposing their laws on Hungary. Szelenyi's father was forced out of his job. Universities closed their doors to Jews.

The next step was the rounding up of the Jews. The Nazis began by forcing the Szelenyi family to move to a different, all-Jewish apartment building. Then in October 1944, the Nazis ordered all young men to assemble in the lobby of the apartment building. By this point Szelenyi's father had been taken, so he left his mother and grandmother, promising that he would be back soon.

Instead he was marched to a brick factory outside of the city. They were soon divided into groups of 1000. Of his group, only 11 survived. This group of 1000 marched from Budapest to the Austrian border during the cold European winter, a distance comparable to that between San Francisco and Los Angeles. During this march, his mother managed to have a coat as well as some papers delivered to him. Unfortunately, he never discovered what these papers were due to the constant marching. Possibly, they were papers granting him Swedish citizenship; Sweden was neutral during World War II.

During this march, they were poorly fed once a day. Even this was luxury compared to what they endured on the cattle cars that they were loaded on at the border. During their four-day journey they had no food or water. They used a bucket for their bodily waste. Few slept and some died, while some resorted to drinking their urine. Their destination was Buchenwald, a concentration camp.

There they were forced to partake in hard labor. Sleep was impossible due to the crowding, with three or four people to a bunk. They were fed with bread and soup once a day. By the end of the war, Szelenyi could not sit without pain; he was literally skin and bones. Roll call was twice a day and involved standing for hours in the cold while the guards checked that all were present. At Buchenwald he met Dr. Feldman, an elderly man who was extremely sick. When he came to Buchenwald he walked with a cane due to this illness. He and Szelenyi formed a team, combining his intelligence with Szelenyi's strength.

Discipline at the camp was strict. Tobacco was the currency of the camp and could be traded for food. At one point, while cleaning an officer's quarters, Szelenyi found a packet of tobacco and stole it. He traded it for food but was ratted out. Originally he was to be shot, but his knowledge of German enabled him to talk himself out of the situation. He was instead whipped twenty-one times a day for the next month. Another popular form of discipline was throwing internees into the latrine.

As the end of the war approached, the Nazi guards gathered the prisoners and began the Death March, which lasted a week or two. There was no food and prisoners who fell were immediately shot. Eventually, as it became clear that they would not be able to evade the Allied soldiers, the guards abandoned the prisoners. At this point Dr. Feldman suspected that they were at the Czech border and so they made a run for it. They ran into a Transit Camp to Auschwitz. They stayed there until the end of the war.

However, the end of the war was not the end of the suffering. The Russian soldiers liberating the camp released the stores of food to the prisoners and allowed them to eat as much as they wanted. The underfed stomachs of the prisoners could not handle the sudden influx of food, leading to severe cases of diarrhea that often led to death.

Szelenyi proceeded to Budapest, using any type of vehicle, including army tanks, that he could get his hands on. There he found his mother and grandmother still living. His father, he later found out, had died in the war. Upon arriving he resumed a somewhat normal life. In 1948, unwilling to live under the Communist regime, he fled to Germany. There he stayed in a Displaced Persons camp and became an interpreter for Americans stationed there. The next year he received a visa to come to America. He lived in New York City for several years before moving to the Bay Area, where he has lived since.

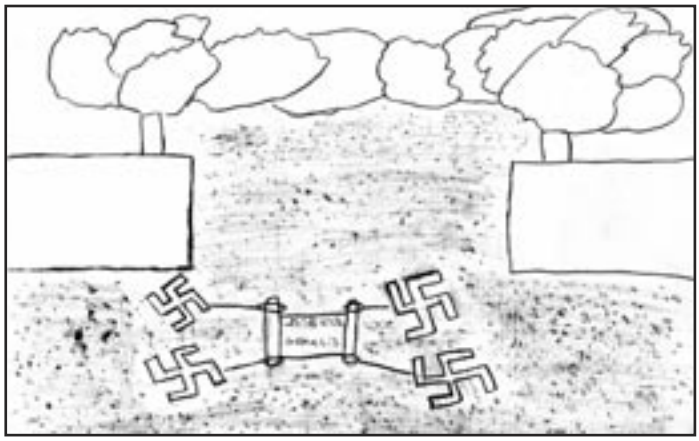
"The Last Ride" by Elliot Fine and Jason Kaye

"Never Surrender - The White Rose"
by David Linder

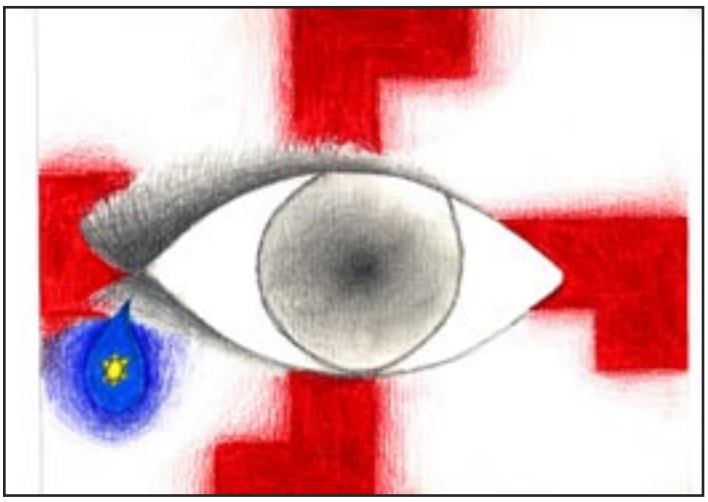
"The legacy of the survivors of the Holocaust must live on through the voices of others in order that this chapter in our history is never forgotten and never allowed to take place again."

— Rebecca Cohn
Assemblymember, 24th District

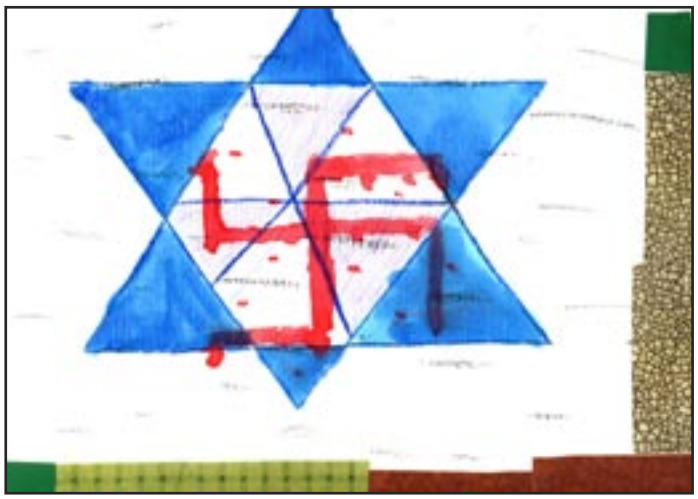
“Blood Thirsty” by Emily Isaacs



“Freedom Constrained” by Julian Lewis



“Tears of God” by Eliana Green



“Smack” by Matthew Diamond

“Trapped Identity” by Ester Teplitsky

“The Unextinguishable Flames” by Amit Deutsch